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J&K begins profiling of mosques, madrassas

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Confident India eye ODI series win against Kiwis

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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2,000 PROTESTERS KILLED IN IRAN

Oppn claims toll is 12,000; Trump says 'help is on the way'

DUBAI, 13 JAN

The death toll from nationwide protests in Iran spiked to at least 2,000 people, activists said on Tuesday. However, opposition newspaper Iran International said it believes at least 12,000 people were killed since the protests broke out on 28 December, the largest toll in Iran's modern history.

The Islamic Republic branded those deceased as "terrorists", as the theocracy eased the communication blackout and allowed Iranians to make phone calls abroad for the first time in days.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said that at least 135 of the killed were government-affiliated, and estimated that at least 10,700 people have been detained.

However, Iran International said that the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and other security forces carried out the massacre intentionally. It's editorial desk cited security officials and said majority of the killings took place on 8 and 9 January.

Rows of bodies wrapped in body bags were seen in videos filmed outside a Tehran morgue in Iran **PHOTO: @OSINT613**

Iran has not released an official death toll.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump told Iranians to keep protesting because "help is on its way".

In a short post on his Truth Social, Trump said he cancelled all his meetings with Iranian officials until the killing stops.

"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING - TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!! Save the names of the killers and abusers. They will pay a big price," he wrote.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran if it cracked down on protesters. While ruling out boots on the ground, he threatened airstrikes, and has reportedly spoken about psychological warfare.

"I think they're tired of being beat up by the United States," Trump said. " His comments came after Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he had communicated with US envoy Steve Witkoff

Iran, meanwhile, has denounced Trump's comments as imperialist threats.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has called the protesters US and Israeli agents, while Iran's Parliament has threatened to strike any of their military facilities. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5, 6

India hit as US slaps 25% tariff on Iran's trade partners

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 13 JAN

US President Donald Trump announced that any country "doing business" with Iran will face a 25 per cent tariff on trade with Washington, a move that could affect Tehran's major partners, including India, China, Turkey, Pakistan, UAE and Armenia.

India has been one of Iran's top five trading partners in recent years. The US already levies some of the highest tariffs on India. According to the Indian Embassy in Tehran, major exports from India to Iran include rice, tea, sugar, pharmaceuticals, manmade fibres, electrical machinery and artificial jewellery, while key imports from Iran include dry fruits, chemicals, and glassware. In 2023, India exported $1.19 billion worth of goods to Iran, including rice ($734M), soybean meal ($96.8M) and bananas ($52M), and imported $1.02 billion, led by acyclic alcohol derivatives ($309M). India and Iran share key trade pacts. A key aspect of the bilateral relationship is the Chabahar Port in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province. India and Iran signed a MoU in 2015 for its development, followed by the 2016 trilateral Chabahar Agreement with Afghanistan to boost the International Transport and Transit Corridor. Indian company India Ports Global Limited now operates the Shahid Beheshti Terminal under a ten-year contract signed in May 2024 with Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation. *—PTI*

Take them to your house: SC to dog feeders

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday warned that dog feeders could be held accountable for dog-bite incidents, highlighting concerns over the poor implementation of stray animal norms over the past five years. The bench said those who feed stray dogs will be deemed "responsible" if the animals attack people. Justice Nath asked, "If you love these animals so much, then why don't you take them to your house? Why should these dogs loiter around, bite and scare people?" Justice Mehta added, "Who should be held accountable when dogs attack a 9-year-old? The organisation that is feeding them?" *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Canada PM to visit India for trade deal

OTTAWA, 13 JAN

With Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney stating that Ottawa, in order to diversify its global trade landscape, will be doubling their non-US exports by the next decade, Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Patnaik said that the Canadian PM is set to visit India in the coming weeks for the expansion of bilateral trade with New Delhi. Speaking to CBC's "Power & Politics", the Indian Envoy on Monday stated that Carney's visit to India is aimed at diversifying Canada's trading partners amid high tariffs by the US. Both India and Canada are facing high tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump on their exports. *—ANI*

Centre mulls entrance exams at Class 11 level

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

A Centre-appointed panel for suggesting reforms in entrance exams and reducing dependency on coaching centres is exploring the possibility of holding crucial entrance exams in class 11 or aligning the grade's exams with their difficulty level, according to officials. The panel is analysing data to study if the difficulty level of entrance exams is in sync with the difficulty level of Class 12 curriculum. "In its recent meeting, the stakeholders suggested that if few of the entrances can be conducted at Class 11 level or at least the exams for this class be in the same MCQ format as that of the entrance exams. The possibility is being studied," a source said. *—PTI*

SC adjourns Sonam Wangchuk's plea to 29 Jan

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday adjourned to 29 January the hearing of a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against his detention under the National Security Act. A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale deferred the matter. "List for further hearing on 29 January 2026," the bench said. Angmo told the court on Monday that the detaining authority had not applied his mind and relied on irrelevant material while detaining her husband. She had earlier submitted that the tenor of a speech delivered by her husband at Leh was not to propagate violence, but to quell it, and that facts were being manipulated to portray him as a criminal. *—PTI*

Germany's Merz visits Bosch campus, IISc in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

On the last leg of his two-day visit to India, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Tuesday visited the Bosch campus here at Adugodi. The Chancellor also visited the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering at the Indian Institute of Science.

During the visit, the delegation experienced Bosch's H2ICE demonstrator truck featuring a fully integrated powertrain and telematics system.

The German Chancellor was visibly impressed by the work done by Bosch India with the local talent in tandem with Bosch Germany. He said that Bosch had some 40,000 employees in India.

"Impressive expertise is concentrated here," he said while visiting a site for German tech firm Bosch in Bengaluru, according to Reuters.

Merz pointed to work on hydrogen technology for trucks as well as the application of AI for industrial uses being done at the campus.

Commerce Minister MB Patil welcomes German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: X/@MBPATIL**

He said that the SAP software company had a substantial presence in India. He said Germany's pharmaceutical industry also saw opportunities in the country.

Merz also noted that people in India were showing growing interest in the German language, with some 2,50,000 people attending German courses.

The German delegation was also introduced to a range of Bosch's software solutions, including AIShield, an AI security platform designed to ensure the protection and reliability of artificial intelligence systems. AIShield includes 150 patents in AI security, the release said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

SC gives split verdict on probing govt workers

- The case will now be heared by a larger bench formed by CJI Surya Kant.

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday delivered a split verdict on the constitutional validity of a 2018 provision of the anti-graft law which mandates prior sanction for initiating a probe against a government servant in a corruption case.

While Justice BV Nagarathna said Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act is unconstitutional and needs to be struck down, Justice KV Viswanathan held the provision as constitutional while stressing on the need to protect honest officers.

The top court's judgement came on a PIL filed by NGO 'Centre for Public Interest Litigation' (CPIL) against the validity of amended section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

"Section 17A is unconstitutional and it ought to be struck down. No prior approval is required to be taken... The requirement of prior sanction is contrary to the object of the Act, and it forecloses inquiry and protects the corrupt rather than seeking to protect the honest and those with integrity who really do not require any protection," Justice Nagarathna said.

Justice Viswanathan said striking down section 17A will be akin to throwing the baby out with the bath water and the "cure will be worse than the disease".

"Section 17A is constitutionally valid subject to the condition that the sanction must be decided by the Lok Pal or the Lokayukta of the State...

The case will now be placed before Chief Justice of India Surya Kant for forming a larger bench to hear the matter for a final decision. *—PTI*

EC tells SC it must examine citizenship for electoral rolls

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it is the original authority for electoral rolls and poll conduct, and its opinion is binding on the President if a person acquires citizenship of another country.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the EC, said the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in states like Bihar is constitutionally and statutorily valid. He clarified that adverse findings only lead to exclusion from the voter list and "do not ipso facto result in deportation," though cases may be referred to the Centre for scrutiny under the Citizenship Act, the Foreigners Act, and related laws.

Dwivedi emphasised that electoral scrutiny is limited to determining eligibility for voting, distinguishing it from the National Register of Citizens (. The lawyer noted that citizenship is examined under other regulatory frameworks, such as mining leases, and stressed the EC's constitutional duty to ensure only eligible citizens are on the rolls, in line with Article 326. The bench will resume hearings on Thursday. *—PTI*

Now, Karnataka cracks down on Bangladeshis

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said the State government has begun verifying reports of Bangladeshi nationals obtaining Aadhaar and other identity documents.

His remarks came after Hebbagodi police on Sunday arrested two Bangladeshi nationals for illegally staying in Bengaluru, taking the total number of such arrests over the past two weeks to 17.

Parameshwara said senior police officials have been directed to compile detailed data on the presence of Bangladeshi nationals in Karnataka, with the focus on identifying those who entered the country illegally and secured local identity documents to remain in the state. He said some illegal immigrants have already been deported.

He blamed poor border management and porous borders, stating that it was the Centre's responsibility to prevent illegal entry. He added that many migrants choose Bengaluru because it is considered a peaceful city.

Police have also identified and deported Bangladeshi nationals working in coffee estates in Sakaleshpur and received information about their presence in Anekal and neighbouring areas.Parameshwara warned citizens against taking the law into their own hands. *—PTI*

SWIGGY, ZEPTO NEXT?

Govt makes Blinkit drop 10-minute delivery

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Eternal-owned quick-commerce firm Blinkit has dropped its '10-minute' delivery claim after intervention by the Labour Ministry.

This comes amid growing concerns over the welfare and safety of delivery workers.

Other aggregators like Zepto and Swiggy-owned Instamart are also expected to follow suit, sources told PTI.

The 10-minute delivery had led to gig workers holding a nationwide strike on New Year's Eve in 2025.

Sources said Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya persuaded the delivery aggregators. Mandaviya chaired a meeting last week with leading platforms, including Blinkit, Zepto, Zomato and Swiggy, to address concerns related to delivery timelines.

Blinkit's principal tagline has now been revised from "10,000+ products delivered in 10 minutes" to "30,000+ products delivered at your doorstep".

Gig and Platform Service Workers Union (GIPSWU) welcomed the government's intervention and stated: "This is an important step toward ensuring the safety, health, and dignity of gig and platform workers. Healthy workers are productive workers, and they are central to India's vision of being the fastest-growing major economy by 2030."

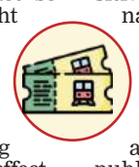
The union submitted a demand letter to Mandaviya on 24 December, 2025, and also filed a complaint to National Human Rights Commission on Monday.

Time-bound targets and algorithm-driven pressures create conditions that can resemble forced labour, the union said. Eternal Group CEO Deepinder Goyal had claimed that the 10-minute delivery promise does not pressure riders or lead to unsafe driving, as they are not shown the timer. *—PTI*

RAILWAYS FARE CALCULATION METHOD 'TRADE SECRET', RTI BINNED

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Indian Railways has informed the Central Information Commission (CIC) that its methodology for calculating passenger train fares is a "trade secret" and cannot be disclosed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.



The CIC was hearing an appeal seeking detailed information on the base fare calculation mechanism, including dynamic pricing and the effect of Tatkal bookings for train tickets, specifically for the Paschim Superfast Express. In its reply, the Railway Board said fares are class-based, with variations arising from facilities provided in different classes.

However, it maintained that the classification and methodology for fare fixation fall under trade secrets and intellectual property rights, exempt from disclosure under Section 8 of the RTI Act, which protects sensitive information including national security, trade secrets, and personal data.

The Railway Board's Chief Public Information Officer added that revealing detailed pricing mechanisms is not justified in public interest. The Commission observed that all disclosable information and general principles of railway fare policy had already been provided. With the appellant absent during the hearing, Information Commissioner dismissed the appeal. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Andhra BTech graduate held for Naukri.com scam

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

CEN police here have arrested a BTech graduate from Andhra Pradesh for allegedly cheating job aspirants and stealing their personal data from employment websites.

The case came to light after an engineering graduate from Kolar complained that his resume uploaded on a job portal was misused. The accused, identified as Sunil Kumar Reddy, allegedly accessed resumes on Naukri.com, contacted candidates using fake email IDs and promised lucrative jobs in reputed companies. He allegedly collected more than Rs three lakh from the complainant on the pretext of securing employment. *—Salar News*

3 held in M'luru for attempted murder, hate speech

MANGALURU, 13 JAN

Three people were arrested for allegedly assaulting a man and attempting to murder him after hurling communal abuses, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred within the limits of Kavoor police station on 11 January, when the accused allegedly restrained the complainant, questioned his religious identity, abused him with derogatory language, and assaulted him with a wooden club, according to a police press release. Following a complaint, Kavoor police registered a case on 12 January. The accused have been identified as Ratheesh Das, 32, Dhanush, 24 and Sagar, 24, all residents of Kuloor village in Mangaluru taluk. Police said the arrests were made under the supervision of senior officers of the Mangaluru North Sub-Division. *—PTI*

Will comply with SC order on GBA elections: DKS

DyCM stresses need to conduct Zilla, Taluk elections soon

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the State government will go by the Supreme Court's directive and hold the long-pending elections to the five city corporations, under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), before 30 June.

Shivakumar said at Palace Grounds on Tuesday that the government was prepared to hold the polls and would not seek an extension.

"We need to conduct Zilla and Taluk panchayat elections also and we will whatever is necessary under the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitutio," he said.

Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru Development portfolio, added, "We will give necessary directions to the State Election Commission.... The State Election Commission has submitted an affidavit before the (Supreme) Court and that issue is left to them."

The tenure of the earlier elected body, under the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), expired on 10 September, 2020, and since then, a government-appointed administrator has been taking care of its day-to-day affairs.

Asked about technical objections, he said, "Some people have submitted technical objections, we have formed a committee and it will look into it.... There is a talk that reservation for women is not adequate, we will direct them to look into it. We will not interfere."

Shivakumar expressed confidence that the Congress would win. "We are preparing new leaders by empowering party workers."

He also reiterated that BJP and JD(S) should contest the polls together, saying it would be better for the Congress.

He said that a two-way contest would be more interesting than a "triangle conteset". *—Salar News with agencies*

AFTER NEARLY 37 YEARS

KPCC seeks public response on student union polls

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

The Congress government's committee formed to examine the revival of student union elections in Karnataka convened its first meeting on Tuesday at the KPCC Bhavan. The meeting was chaired by Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Sharanaprakash Patil.

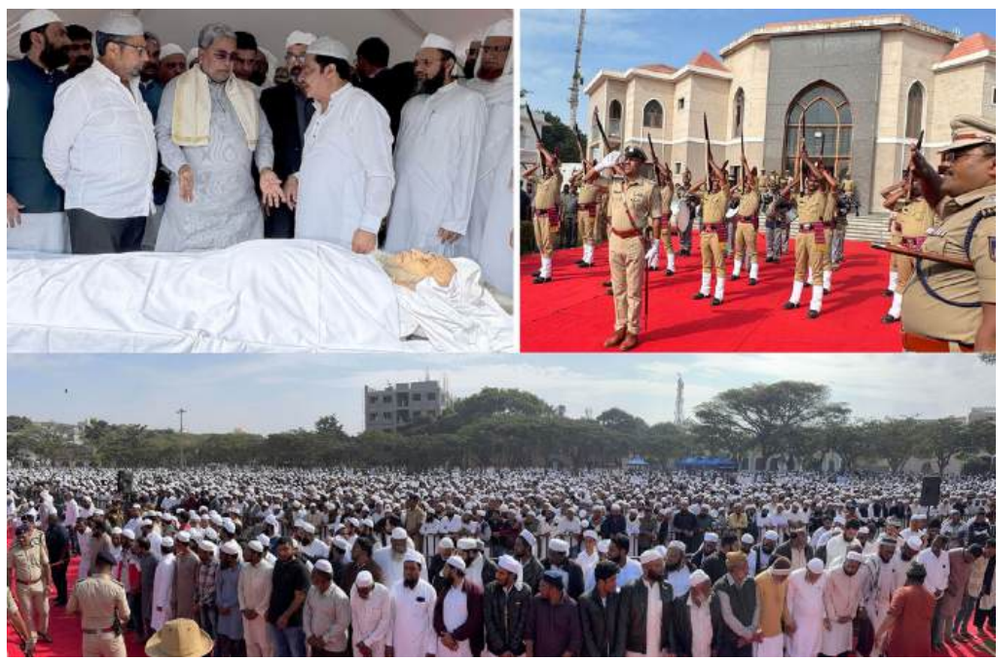
An 11-member panel was set up in December 2025 as the government considers reviving campus elections after nearly 37 years to nurture youth leadership. The move followed a suggestion by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Student union elections were banned in 1989 after violent incidents under the Congress government led by Veerendra Patil.

The panel agreed that it cannot take a unilateral decision on holding student elections, citing their wide social implications, and stressed the need for broad public consensus through consultations.

Members held a preliminary on possible framework for conducting student elections. The committee has invited students, parents, educators and the general public to share their views during its tenure. An exclusive email ID (**karstudentselections@gmail.com**) has been created to receive suggestions. The next meeting is scheduled for 22 January.

Among other political leaders, the meeting was attended by Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar, and NSUI leaders Keerthi Ganesh and Lakshya Raj. *—Salar News*

FINAL PASSAGE



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and hundred others paid their last respect to the late islamic scholar Hazrat Maulana Saghir Ahmad Khan Rashadi Saheb. He was the Ameer-e-Shariyath of Karnataka and head of the Darul Uloom Sabeel Ur Rashadi institution, and passed away in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Germany, India eye $8B sub deal as Merz comes to B'luru

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

Talks on the proposed USD 8 billion submarine deal between India and Germany are moving in a positive direction, with discussions on technical, financial and commercial aspects continuing, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Tuesday. While noting that the negotiations are yet to be concluded, Misri said they have maintained "positive momentum".

"There are technical, financial and commercial discussions involved in a deal of this kind. These discussions are continuing," he said, adding that it was difficult to specify the exact stage until talks are finalised.

Under the potential agreement, Germany's Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems would build six submarines for the Indian Navy in partnership with state-run Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders.

For New Delhi, the deal is significant as it would provide access to advanced German defence technology and help replace its ageing Russian-built submarine fleet.

The agreement is equally important for Berlin, as it would reduce India's dependence on Russian defence equipment while allowing Germany to strengthen its footprint in India's growing defence market.

Speaking in Bengaluru, Merz said he believed the Iranian government was in its "final days and weeks" and urged Tehran to end violence against demonstrators. *—PTI*

$8B SUBMARINE DEAL

India is looking to buy six submarines worth $8 billion from Germany to boost the Navy's arsenal. Here's all you need to know about the diesel-electric 214NG submarine:

- Can launch heavyweight anti-ship torpedoes.
- Advanced sonar sensors provide long range detection.

45% of the submarines will feature indigenous content.

SURVEILLANCE AND STEALTH

- Can be submerged for several weeks, instead of days.
- It has fuel-cell-based air-independent propulsion (AIP)

system, with low acoustic magnetic and infra-red signatures, allowing it to go underwater without being detected by sonar systems.

CM meets Rahul, dismisses CM change

MYSURU, 13 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah met Rahul Gandhi in Mysuru on Tuesday and said there was no confusion within the party regarding leadership issues.

However, Siddaramaiah said that they did not discuss politics.

"No discussion has taken place today, and none is scheduled for the evening. He (Rahul Gandhi) is en route to Gudalur in Tamil Nadu and will return here later to fly back to Delhi. I will see him off again," Siddaramaiah said.

Responding to questions about media reports on a possible leadership change, the CM said, "What speculations? You (the media) are the ones speculating. There is no such issue within the party. This question itself is baseless."

Commenting on reports that legislators were giving dates for a leadership change, Siddaramaiah said, "Either DK Shivakumar or I would speak on this issue, as we are the ones who know. Have we spoken? No."

Siddaramaiah reiterated that the High Command's decision was final in regards to any possible leadership change.

MLAs have not been taken into confidence, he said.

Siddaramaiah added that he would not be going to New Delhi immediately to discuss the proposed Cabinet reshuffle. *—PTI*

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with CM Siddaramaiah and DyCM DK Shivakumar in Mysuru, on Tuesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

'Why didn't CM, DyCM welcome Merz?'

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

The Opposition BJP asked why Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar did not receive German Chancellor Friedrich Merz during his visit to the City.

Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly R Ashoka alleged that the Congress leaders instead chose to be in Mysuru to receive senior party leader Rahul Gandhi, saying they had "misplaced priorities".

"Any other responsible Chief Minister would have personally ensured that such a visit was accorded the seriousness it deserved—as an opportunity for investment, industry, employment and long-term growth for Karnataka," Ashoka wrote on X.

Calling it more than just "poor optics", the BJP leader said the episode reflected a "deep disregard for the State's interests." *—PTI*

2 kids abducted from Dharwad school, rescued in a day

DHARWAD, 13 JAN

Two Class 3 students of a government school in Kamalapur of the Dharwad district, were kidnapped during lunch on Monday but rescued the same evening near Dandeli in Uttara Kannada district. Police have arrested the accused.

The children, a boy and a girl, were lured by a man offering sweets and taken on his motorcycle. CCTV footage from a nearby house captured the suspect riding away.

Dharwad Suburban Police launched a district-wide search. They received information that a motorcycle carrying a man and two children had met with an accident near Joida, close to Dandeli. Police confirmed the children had been abducted after questioning.

The accused, Abdul Kareem of Dharwad, was injured in the accident and admitted to a government hospital under police custody. SP Gunjan Arya said CCTV footage circulated to all stations helped rescue the children swiftly. They were safely reunited with their parents. *—Salar News*

Court reserves order on MUDA scam

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

The Special Court for Public Representatives on Tuesday reserved its order till 22 January on the Lokayukta police's 'B-report' in the MUDA land allotment case involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi BM and others.

The Lokayukta had filed the closure report citing lack of evidence, which complainant Snehamayi Krishna has challenged.

The matter was heard on Tuesday, when former MUDA commissioner Dinesh Kumar appeared as an accused. The Special Public Prosecutor submitted a synopsis of relevant records, while Krishna, appearing as party-in-person, filed written submissions. The court also directed the physical appearance of all accused on 17 January.

The case pertains to alleged irregular allotment of compensatory sites to Parvathi under MUDA's 50:50 scheme. It is alleged she received plots in an upmarket Mysuru locality with higher market value than her 3.16-acre land acquired for a residential layout.

Siddaramaiah has denied wrongdoing. *— PTI*

6 City dental faculty suspended after student's suicide

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

The Oxford Dental College here on Tuesday suspended six faculty members pending inquiry into the suicide of 23-year-old student Yashaswini. The college stated the suspension will remain in force until further notice while the investigation continues. The suspended staff include senior lecturers Anmol Razdan, Shabana Banu, Faika Kolkar, Alba Dinesh, Reader Sindhu R, and Professor Sushmini Hegde, all from the Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology.

Yashaswini, a third-year student, was found hanging at her residence on Friday. Her family alleged harassment and humiliation at the college drove her to take the extreme step. She was the only child of Parimala and Bhudevaiah. Her mother said Yashaswini had taken leave on Wednesday due to eye pain and was allegedly humiliated the next day for missing a seminar.

Following her death, students staged a sit-in outside the morgue demanding accountability. The college said it was working with officials. *—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Gandhi stadium to be renamed after Parameshwara?

TUMAKURU, 13 JAN

Tension prevailed at the Mahatma Gandhi Sports Complex in Tumakuru after the BJP alleged that the Congress sought to rename it after State Home Minister G Parameshwara, thereby removing Gandhi's name.

However, Parameshwara called the BJP's charge a lie.

He said his supporters wanted to name a shed, which they developed as an indoor stadium, after him.

However, on Monday, BJP workers raised slogans against the Congress government and Parameshwara and protested at the entrance of the stadium, demanding the nameplate be removed. *—PTI*

CLASSES IN HOT SUN

Farmer locks school over land dispute, kids suffer

HAVERI, 13 JAN

A locked government school in Mallur village of Byadagi taluk in the Haveri district due to a land dispute, prevented students from attending classes and forced them to sit outside under the scorching sun.

The unusual incident came to light on Monday after one Eerappa Kulkarni, son of a landlord who had donated a piece of his farmland to build the Government Urdu Higher Primary School in Mallur village, locked the school gate and left, leaving the students in the lurch.

At the root of the problem is a pending land dispute. Eerappa Kulkarni alleged that his father, Shankrappa Kulkarni, had donated around five guntas of land several years ago for the construction of the school. He claimed that during construction, the school building encroached upon land beyond what was originally donated for the purpose.

The issue of the alleged encroachment by the school has been challenged in court for several years. A litigation in this regard is currently underway. Eerappa has been demanding the vacation of the encroached land. Exasperated by the long delay in resolving the matter by the authorities, he reportedly lost his cool and locked the school gate on Monday.

As soon as information about the incident reached the authorities, Byadagi Tahsildar Chandrashekar, Block Education Officer (BEO) SGs Kote, and police officials rushed to the spot. The situation was brought under control, and steps were taken to ensure students' education was not disrupted.

The officials assured that the land dispute would be examined through a survey and resolved legally.

A meeting was held at the school involving villagers, the school management committee, and government officials. *—Salar News*

Children in Mallur village, Haveri district take classes outside after a farmer claimed the government Urdu school encroached on his land **PHOTO: SALAR**

Modi can't suppress Tamil people's voice: RaGa backs Vijay

His remarks come amid TVK Chief Vijay's ongoing 'Jana Nayagan' film row

NEW DELHI/ UDHAGAMANDALAM, 13 JAN

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that the Centre's "attempt to block" Vijay-starrer 'Jana Nayagan' is an attack on Tamil culture, and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will never succeed in "suppressing the voice of the Tamil people".

Gandhi's remarks come on a day he is on a visit to poll-bound Tamil Nadu where the row over actor-turned-politician Vijay's Tamil film has snowballed into a major issue.

The producer of the film approached the Supreme Court, challenging a 9 January interim order of the Madras High Court that stayed a single-judge direction to grant the CBFC clearance to the movie. The High Court has left the fate of the film, which has drawn attention for its political overtones, in limbo.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi celebrating Pongal in Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "The I&B Ministry's attempt to block 'Jana Nayagan' is an attack on Tamil culture." "Mr Modi, you will never succeed in suppressing the voice of the Tamil people," he said.

Meanwhile, Gandhi alleged that the nation's democratic structure and the voice of the people are under attack by those running the central government.

Taking part in harvest festival 'Pongal' celebrations held at the St Thomas English High School in Gudalur near here, Gandhi, while interacting with students, said he wanted to develop an India where people are kind to each other, where people listen to each other, respect each other's traditions, respect each other's languages, respect each other's religions, and are kind to each other. The most important value for a politician, student, or a teacher is humility. "So I would advise all the children here to be humble."

To a question by a student he said, "democracy is the idea that you should have a voice, I should have a voice, all these people should have a voice." *—PTI*

SC TO HEAR VIJAY'S JANA NAYAGAN PLEA

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court is slated to hear a plea on 19 January from the producer of the **Vijay**-starrer 'Jana Nayagan'. KVN Productions LLP has challenged a Madras High Court interim order that paused the Central Board of Film Certification's (CBFC) clearance for the Tamil film.

'Jana Nayagan' has been promoted as his final and most politically charged film before a full-time transition into politics, following the launch of his political party, TVK. sWhile the film was slated for on 9 January its but its release will remain in limbo due to delays in censor certification.

Following the stay order, the film's producers also sought the postponement of the theatrical re-release of Vijay's popular film 'Theri'.

VIJAY PROBED IN STAMPEDE CASE

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned Vijay for a second round of questioning on 19 January in connection with the Karur stampede case. As part of the probe, CBI has questioned several TVK office bearers. *—Agencies*

Puducherry to give ₹3,000 Pongal gift to 3.47L families

PUDUCHERRY, 13 JAN

The Puducherry government on Tuesday said it will provide a Pongal gift of Rs 3,000 to each of the 3.47 lakh families covered under the public distribution system, with immediate effect.

According to a release, Chief Minister N Rangasamy has directed the Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs to credit the amount to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer system.

The cash assistance is in addition to the free distribution of a Pongal commodity package worth Rs 750 being provided through ration shops to PDS cardholders, it added.

Each kit comprises rice (4kg), naatu sakkarai (1kg), moong dal (1kg), sunflower oil (1 litre) and ghee (300 grams), along with a bag. *—PTI*

India unveils BRICS 2026 logo, theme and website

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

India assumed the presidency of BRICS on 1 January 2026, its fourth term after 2012, 2016, and 2021. On Makar Sankranti's eve, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar launched the official website, theme, and logo at New Delhi's Sushma Swaraj Bhawan. The logo features India's national flower, the lotus, with the salutation 'Namaste' at its center, symbolising unity, diversity, and shared purpose. The theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," reflects India's focus on people-centric, inclusive development. He highlighted priorities including strengthening resilience in health, agriculture, energy, and supply chains, fostering innovation and start-ups, promoting climate action, and supporting multilateral institutions. *—ANI*

Expelled Cong leader in Odisha floats new party

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JAN

Expelled Congress leader Mohammed Moquim has called on youths to unite and offer an alternative to the people of Odisha. He announced plans to launch a new political party by the end of March and hosted a convention on National Youth Day on Monday. Apart from his daughter, Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, few prominent politicians attended, though sources said Moquim is in touch with dissatisfied leaders across the state's major parties. He stated the proposed party would be distinct and challenge existing political dominance, emphasising the power of youth to bring change. Firdous expressed confidence in her father's ability. *—PTI*

'1993 Mumbai blast convict can only get 2-day parole'

MUMBAI, 13 JAN

Convicted 1993 serial blasts gangster Abu Salem has applied for emergency parole following the death of his elder brother, Abu Hakim Ansari, in November 2025. Salem requested 14 days to attend the funeral and related rituals. The Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court that, as an "international criminal", he could only be granted two days' parole with police escort, costs to be borne by him. Salem's lawyer, Farhana Shah, argued two days were insufficient due to travel to Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh and said police escort was unnecessary, noting he has been in jail for over two decades. The court directed the government to file an affidavit stating its objections to longer parole and posted the matter for further hearing next week. *—PTI*

PM defamation: HC rejects Kejriwal, Singh's pleas

AHMEDABAD, 13 JAN

The Gujarat High Court on Tuesday rejected appeals by AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Sanjay Singh seeking separate trials in a defamation case over comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational degree. The case was filed by Gujarat University registrar Piyush Patel, who alleged the leaders' remarks were "sarcastic and derogatory" and harmed the university's reputation. Kejriwal and Singh had requested separate trials, claiming the incidents and accusations were distinct. Both the trial and sessions courts had earlier dismissed their pleas, noting the statements were made in April 2023 as members of the same party, appearing to act in "one transaction, animated by a common purpose." HC upheld these rulings and issued summons to them under Section 500 of the IPC. *—PTI*

MAHARASHTRA CIVIC ELECTIONS

Poll: 4-day liquor ban, D street to shut

MUMBAI, 13 JAN

The Maharashtra State will see a four-day liquor ban and widespread shutdowns as voting for 29 municipal corporations takes place on 15 January, with authorities enforcing strict restrictions to ensure smooth civic polls.

A dry period from 13 to 16 January bans the sale and consumption of alcohol across poll-bound civic limits after campaigning ends on 13 January. Liquor shops, bars and permit rooms will remain closed, with strict action warned against violations. Security and monitoring have been intensified in sensitive areas.

Polling will be held on 15 January in cities including Mumbai, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, with counting on 16 January.

- A dry period from 13 to 16 January bans the sale and consumption of alcohol across poll-bound civic limits after campaigning ends on 13 January.

The State has declared a public holiday in Mumbai for government offices, PSUs, banks and civic bodies. Stock markets will remain closed, with the BSE and NSE suspending trading across segments.

Campaigning peaked with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis attacking Uddhav and Raj Thackeray, calling the Mumbai civic election a "battle of survival" for the cousins. Union minister Ramdas Athawale said Uddhav Thackeray lost the Shiv Sena's bow-and-arrow symbol due to his political choices after 2019.

Enforcement agencies seized liquor, ganja and weapons in Nanded, booking or externing 929 persons ahead of polling.

Separately, elections to 12 Zilla Parishads and 125 Panchayat Samitis will be held on 5 February, with counting on 7 February. The Model Code of Conduct has come into force.

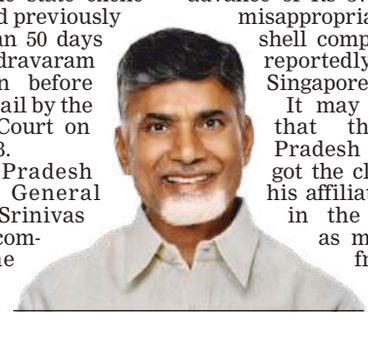
PUNE HOARDINGS ROW

The BJP has complained to the Election Commission over alleged illegal hoardings by rival parties in Pune. The party vowed to make the city flex-free. *—Agencies*

Andhra CM gets clean chit in skill development case

VIJAYAWADA, 13 JAN

A local court in Vijayawada has dismissed the case against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N Chandrababu Naidu** concerning alleged misappropriation of funds from the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation , which was said to have led to a loss of over Rs 300 crore to the state exchequer. Naidu had previously spent more than 50 days in Rajamahendravaram Central Prison before being granted bail by the Andhra High Court on 31 October, 2023.



Andhra Pradesh Advocate General Dammalapati Srinivas stated, "After completing the investigation, the agency filed a closure report stating that there was no substance in the case regarding Naidu's role." The court accepted this report on 13 January, 2026.

Naidu was initially arrested on 9 September 2023, during the tenure of YSRCP Chief Jagan Mohan Reddy. The case centred around the establishment of Centres of Excellence, with allegations that an advance of Rs 371 crore was misappropriated through shell companies, some reportedly based in Singapore.

It may be recalled that the Andhra Pradesh CM has got the clean chit for his affiliation to NDA in the same way as many leaders from various parties. *—PTI*

Didi says EC takes orders over WhatsApp to change SIR

KOLKATA, 13 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the Election Commission (EC) of operating on "WhatsApp instructions" while altering the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) rules multiple times daily.

Banerjee alleged that 54 lakh genuine voters were deleted from the draft electoral rolls without being informed of the reasons or given a chance to defend themselves.

"The EC, while sitting in Delhi, used AI tools devised by the BJP to delete names," she claimed, citing examples of women whose names were removed due to post-marriage surname changes, alongside the deletion of many living voters. Banerjee has written five letters to Chief Election Commissioner Ganesh Kumar, expressing concern over unilateral decisions and errors affecting voter registrations. She warned that the BJP-EC nexus was preparing to eliminate another one crore names from the final rolls.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a press conference over the issue of SIR of electoral rolls, in Kolkata **PHOTO: PTI**

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee presented 10 individuals, reportedly marked as deceased in the electoral rolls, at a rally, asserting that EC was infringing upon citizens' voting rights.

In a stark response, BJP's state President Samik Bhattacharyya cautioned the EC against proceeding with elections unless their claims regarding the draft voters' list were acknowledged. *—PTI*

Kerala BJP supports renaming Kerala as 'Keralam'

T'PURAM, 13 JAN

The Kerala unit of the BJP has declared its support for the LDF government's initiative to rename the state to "Keralam," appealing for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention.

State Chief **Rajeev Chandrasekhar** communicated the party's position in letters to both the Prime Minister and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. He asserted that the renaming would help thwart extremist agendas seeking to divide the state along religious lines.

His letter noted that the Legislative Assembly had previously passed a resolution for the name change in official records. He stated, "A Keralam deeply rooted in its history... will also serve to blunt the efforts of some radical elements... who continue to raise demands for carving out more 'separate districts' based on religion." He expressed hope for a collaborative effort to preserve Kerala's rich heritage and foster a "Vikasita, Surakshita Keralam."

EX-CPI(M) MLA JOINS CONGRESS

In a notable political shift, former CPI(M) MLA Aisha Potty has joined the opposition Congress after over a decade with the Left party. Potty, who represented Kottarakkara Assembly constituency for three terms, cited feelings of neglect within CPI(M) and noted, "I found it difficult to align with several of its positions." She emphasised her commitment to mingling with people across various divides, while downplaying speculation about an immediate electoral candidacy. *—PTI*

SC rejects PIL for removal of Savarkar portrait

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking the removal of portraits of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar from Parliament and other public spaces, warning the petitioner of exemplary costs before allowing the plea to be withdrawn.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi cautioned the petitioner, retired Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer B Balamurugan, against filing what it described as a frivolous petition. "This kind of frivolous petition... shows the mindset," the CJI said.

The bench was irked by the petitioner's submission that he could not come to argue the case in person because of financial constraints.

During the hearing, the CJI questioned the petitioner's background and service record, including his last posting before retirement and the circumstances under which he was denied promotions.

Asked whether he faced corruption charges, Balamurugan replied in the negative, stating instead that he had faced departmental action after undertaking a hunger strike in 2009 for "peace in Sri Lanka".

"Please don't indulge in all this. Enjoy your retirement now. Have some constructive role in society," the CJI remarked. *—PTI*

Shah lays foundation for 2nd BSL-4 lab in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 13 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday laid the foundation stone of the BSL-4 Biocontainment Facility of the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre in Gandhinagar, noting that India won't be dependent on foreign countries for testing samples of dangerous viruses.

He said testing of samples will also become faster after the facility is activated.

Shah noted that despite India's population of 1.4 billion, the country so far had only one BSL-4 laboratory at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune, forcing samples to be transported hundreds of kilometres for testing. He said Gujarat has become the first state to establish a Biosafety Level-4 (BSL-4) laboratory, the highest level of biosafety containment required for handling highly contagious and fatal viruses, with no available vaccines or treatments.

Shah said this is the second BSL-4 laboratory in the country, but the first one being built by a state government, and the credit for this goes to Gujarat.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the foundation stone laying ceremony of BSL-4 lab in Gandhinagar, Gujarat **PHOTO: PTI**

Addressing a gathering, Shah said a new era of India's health security, bio-safety, and development of the bio sector has begun under the leadership of PM Modi, according to a PIB release.

He said the laboratory will emerge in the coming days as a strong protective shield for the Indian health sector. *—PTI*

BJP CALLS IT FORMAL MEETING

Chinese Communist Party delegation meets RSS Gen Secy

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

A delegation of the Communist Party of China (CPC) called on RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale in here on Tuesday, sources said.

The Chinese delegation met the RSS second-in-command here at 11am at his office, and the meeting lasted for about an hour, the sources said.

"It was a courtesy call by them. The request for the meeting had come from the Chinese side," they said.

This comes a day after a CPC delegation, led by its international department's Vice Minister Sun Haiyan, visited the BJP headquarters here on Monday. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong was also part of the delegation which visited the BJP office on Monday.

Meanwhile, TMC leader Sagarika Ghose questioned the CPC members' visit to the BJP headquarters here, and accused the ruling party of having "double standards".

Chinese Communist Party delegation with the BJP delegation **PHOTO: ANI**

In a post on X, Ghose, deputy leader of TMC in Rajya Sabha, said China lent "open military support" to Pakistan against India during the Operation Sindoor and questioned how BJP would have reacted if CPC members had visited an opposition party's office.

Responding to TMC's question, the BJP said it held a formal meeting with a Chinese delegation openly, given the "improved" relations between New Delhi and Beijing, unlike the Congress which, it alleged, "secretly" signed a memorandum of understanding with the neighbouring country's ruling party.

BJP also slammed Congress for raising border issues, saying it has "no locus" to do so as the root of the actual problems with China can be traced back to the time of first PM, Jawaharlal Nehru. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@CMOFFICEASSAM

Singer Samar, Bhupen Hazarika's brother, dies at 75

GUWAHATI, 13 JAN

Eminent Assamese composer and singer Samar Hazarika, youngest brother of legendary Bhupen Hazarika, died on Tuesday after a brief illness, family sources said. He was 75 and is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. Hazarika died at his Nizarapar residence, where the extended family lived in separate houses atop a hillock. He had been unwell for some time and was recently discharged from hospital. One of ten siblings, Samar Hazarika sang and composed music for radio, albums and films, playing a key role in carrying forward the family's musical legacy rooted in humanity and universal brotherhood. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal condoled his death and paid tributes to singer.—*PTI*

Sexual assault: Mamkootathil gets 3 day police custody

PATHANAMTHITTA, 13 JAN

A Kerala court here on Tuesday granted custody of expelled Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil to the police for three days in a sexual assault case. A Judicial First Class Magisterial court in Thiruvalla granted the MLA's custody to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the cases of sexual assault registered against him. When he was brought out from the court and taken to the police vehicle, protestors comprising the CPI(M) and BJP youth wing activists threw rotten eggs at Mamkootathil. Earlier in the day, there were intense protests by the CPI(M) and the BJP youth wings against the MLA outside the jail. Mamkootathil was arrested on Sunday in Palakkad in connection with a third sexual assault case.—*PTI*

Hindu body sparys cow dung water at women's event

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JAN

A local organisation sprinkled cow dung water at Bhajan Mandap near Lord Lingaraj temple here as a symbolic protest after a women's bodybuilding championship was held at that place. The 12th East Zone Men's & Women's Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship 2026 was conducted here at the Bhajan Mandap on 10 and 11 January. Several men and women bodybuilders participated in it. In protest of the display of bodies by women, members of 'Puruna Bhubaneswar Sachetan Nagarik Brunda' in Bhubaneswar sprinkled cow dung as "purification ritual" on Tuesday. Chabi Swain, a member of the citizens' forum, said, "Wearing short dresses, the women displayed their bodies, which impure the sacred place.".—*PTI*

Militant involved in fuel station blast in Manipur held

IMPHAL, 13 JAN

A militant of a banned outfit was arrested for his alleged involvement in a bomb explosion at a fuel station in Manipur's Bishnupur district, police said on Tuesday. The 35-year-old accused, an active cadre of Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), was apprehended from Komnao Makha Leikai area in Kakching district, they said. A bomb was hurled at Elidas fuel station in Moirang Thana Leikai area around 8pm on 8 January, police said. The explosion prompted an indefinite closure of all fuel stations across the valley areas in the northeastern state, an official said. No injuries were reported in the incident. "We are in efforts to nab militant's associates involved in the explosion," police said.—*PTI*

Let States compensate for dog-bite incidents: SC

Apex court cites poor enforcement of stray animal norms

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday warned states it would direct payment of heavy compensation for dog-bite incidents and fix accountability on stray dog feeders, citing persistent failure to implement statutory norms over the past five years.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said governments cannot evade responsibility as cases of attacks on children and the elderly continue to rise.

Justice Mehta said the court was concerned that authorities had shown little urgency despite repeated directions on management of stray animals.

The court was hearing petitions seeking modification of its 7 November, 2025, order directing removal of stray animals from institutional areas and public roads. The bench noted instances where civic officials faced resistance while attempting to catch aggressive animals, hampering enforcement.

It also observed that prolonged arguments by activists and NGOs had stalled effective consideration of action plans by the Centre and states.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for an NGO, supported the November order, saying stray dogs had no legal right to occupy institutional premises. The court reiterated that rising dog-bite incidents posed a serious public safety concern.

It said authorities must implement relocation, sterilisation and vaccination measures without delay.

The top court is hearing a suo motu case, initiated on 28 July last year, over a media report on dog bites. —*PTI*

A bench said governments cannot evade responsibility as cases of attacks on children and the elderly continue to rise *PHOTO: PTI*

SC confirms interim bail for UP MLA Ansari

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday confirmed interim bail for Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari, son of late gangster Mukhtar Ansari, in a Gangsters Act case. An FIR was lodged on 31 August, 2024, at Kotwali Karvi, Chitrakoot, alleging extortion and assault. A bench led by CJI Surya Kant regularised bail granted on 7 March, 2025, after submissions by Kapil Sibal. The relief enabled Ansari's release from Kasganj jail. The Allahabad High Court had rejected bail on 18 December, 2024 earlier. —*PTI*

'STRICT SURVEILLANCE ORDERED'

Nipah cases in WB: J'khand on alert

RANCHI, 13 JAN

The Government of Jharkhand on Tuesday sounded an alert after two suspected cases of Nipah virus were reported in neighbouring West Bengal, prompting heightened surveillance and public awareness measures across the State.

The health department has issued detailed guidelines to all districts on surveillance, rapid reporting and outreach, officials said.

Nipah virus is a notifiable disease with a high mortality rate and potential for rapid transmission, making immediate reporting to the Centre mandatory.

"I have given instructions that strict surveillance, a rapid reporting system, and public awareness programmes should be implemented in all districts so that people receive complete information about the symptoms, prevention, and precautions related to the disease, and to prevent any outbreak in Jharkhand," Health Minister Irfan Ansari said in a statement.

A senior official of the West Bengal health department said on Monday that two nurses working at a private hospital in North 24 Parganas district had shown symptoms consistent with Nipah virus infection.

Samples have been sent for confirmation. Union Health Minister JP Nadda has written to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, assuring support. —*PTI*

Op Sindoor: 'We were ready for ground ops'

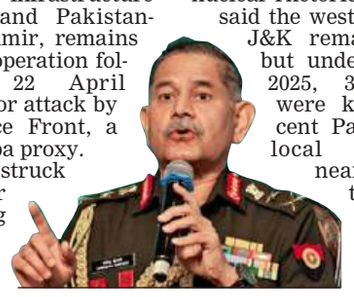
NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

"We were fully ready to launch ground operations during Operation Sindoor, and remain prepared to respond to any future misadventure," Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday.

Addressing his first press conference of 2026, Gen Dwivedi said Operation Sindoor, launched on 7 May against terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, remains ongoing. The operation followed the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack by The Resistance Front, a Lashkar-e-Taiba proxy.

Indian forces struck multiple terror camps, killing over 100 terrorists. Pakistan responded with missile and drone attacks, which were intercepted, prompting Indian strikes on Pakistani airfields before a ceasefire on 10 May.

Calling it the best example of tri-service synergy, the Army chief said the operation was executed with clear political direction and freedom to act. "Through 22 minutes of initiation and 88 hours of orchestration, we reset strategic assumptions and punctured nuclear rhetoric," he said. He said the western front and J&K remain sensitive but under control. In 2025, 31 terrorists were killed, 65 per cent Pakistani, with local recruitment nearly nonexistent. Northern borders remain stable. —*Agencies*



PATIENTS EVACUATED

Jaipur govt hospital ICU gets flooded

JAIPUR, 13 JAN

Fourteen critically ill patients, including 10 on ventilator support, were evacuated from the intensive care unit (ICU) at the government-run Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital in Jaipur after a water pipeline leak flooded the ward, officials said on Tuesday.

Hospital staff reported that nearly six inches of water accumulated inside the ICU late on Monday night, raising fears of electric shock due to the presence of medical equipment. As a precaution, all patients were shifted to other parts of the hospital, with no casualties reported.

Trauma Center in-charge Dr BL Yadav said the ICU was constructed over an area that earlier housed rooms and toilets, where old water pipelines had been buried. Over time, corrosion of these ageing pipes led to the leakage and flooding. He added that the damaged pipelines have since been repaired.

The incident has renewed concerns over ageing infrastructure in public hospitals. It comes days after a major water contamination incident in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, where sewage mixed with drinking water after a leak in a main pipeline, resulting in at least six deaths and hundreds of people being hospitalised with severe vomiting and diarrhoea. —*PTI*

Nearly six inches of water accumulated inside the ICU late on Monday night, raising fears of electric shock *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

HC PIL flags misuse of Nava Kerala funds

KOCHI, 13 JAN

The High Court on Tuesday admitted a PIL accusing the State government of misusing public funds for the Nava Kerala Citizen Response Programme, a survey launched ahead of the Assembly elections.

A bench of Chief Justice Soumen Sen and Justice Syam Kumar VM granted the government time till 21 January to respond to the petition filed by KSU state president Aloshious Xavier.

Filed through advocate Tissy Rose K Cheriyan, the plea alleges "patent misuse" of public exchequer funds and government machinery for a "partisan political campaign disguised as an administrative exercise".

The survey began on 1 January and is scheduled to continue till 28 February.

The petitioner claims CPI(M) cadres and sympathisers were recruited as volunteers, converting a state-funded initiative into a door-to-door political outreach and manifesto preparation exercise.

The plea argues that the government already has verified, digitised household data through the Kerala State Planning Board, including a four-year survey on extreme poverty concluded in 2025. —*PTI*

Delhi wakes up to coldest morning in 3 yrs

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Delhi and large parts of north India reeled under intense cold on Tuesday, with the national capital recording its coldest January morning in three years.

The minimum temperature in Delhi dropped to 3°C, 4.4 degrees below normal, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Palam and Lodhi Road also recorded 4°C and 3°C respectively, while Ayanagar and the Ridge remained well below seasonal averages. Cold wave conditions are likely to persist on Wednesday, with the maximum temperature expected to hover around 20°C.

Delhi's air quality deteriorated to the 'very poor' category, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) settling at 337. Anand Vihar recorded 'severe' air quality with an AQI of 411.

Meanwhile, severe cold also gripped Punjab and Haryana. Chandigarh recorded a minimum of 2.8°C, its lowest in nine years. In Punjab, Ballowal Saunkhri touched 0°C, while Bathinda, Ludhiana, Patiala and Amritsar recorded lows between 1.6°C and 4.1°C.—*PTI*

Akasa Air deplanes flyers after glitch

MUMBAI, 13 JAN

Akasa Air deplaned passengers from a Bengaluru-bound flight at Pune airport on Tuesday morning after a technical glitch was detected in the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft.

Passengers had remained seated for nearly 90 minutes after boarding before being asked to disembark, one of them told PTI. Flight QP1312 was scheduled to depart at 8.50am, with boarding beginning around 8.10am.

The airline later said the delay was due to technical reasons and that the aircraft was undergoing inspection. The flight has been rescheduled to depart at 1.15pm. Affected passengers were offered rebooking on an evening flight or refunds available. —*PTI*

'WHITE COLLAR' TERROR

J&K begins profiling of mosques, madrassas

SRINAGAR, 13 JAN

Authorities in Kashmir have begun profiling mosques, madrassas and those managing them after the busting of a 'white collar' terror module last year, officials said.

Village numberdars (village-level revenue department employees) have been issued a proforma to collect details of mosques, madrassas, imams, teachers and management committee members. The exercise focuses on finances, including funding sources for construction and daily expenses.

Imams and madrassa teachers have been asked to submit Aadhaar, bank, property, passport, SIM and mobile details, social media handles, and information on any past involvement in terrorist or subversive activities, officials said. Details of the sect followed, Barelvi, Deobandi, Hanafi or Ahle Hadeeth, have also been sought.

A senior official said the aim is to build a comprehensive database after investigations showed some suspects were radicalised through madrassas or online platforms, putting certain clerics under scrutiny.

J&K Police, with counterparts in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, busted the module in November, arresting nine people, including three doctors, and seizing 2,900 kg of explosives. The network, linked to Jaish-e-Mohammed and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, spanned Kashmir, Haryana and UP, police said. —*PTI*

Security personnel carry out a vehicle checking drive on the Jammu-Srinagar Highway ahead of the Republic Day, in Anantnag, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Gunshots heard during search op in J&K

Jammu, 13 Jan

Gunshots were heard on Tuesday during a search operation launched by security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district after inputs about a suspected terrorist movement, officials said. Intermittent firing was reported from the Najote forest area of Billawar, around 10km from the Kahog forest belt, where forces had exchanged fire with terrorists on 7 January. Officials said suspects fired first on noticing troops, who retaliated. The cordon-and-search operation has been intensified as security remains heightened ahead of Republic Day. —*PTI*

> **Profiling of religious institutions in J&K is an infringement of constitutional rights**
>
> -Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, Srinagar MP

5 more J&K govt employees sacked

SRINAGAR, 13 JAN

J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday terminated five more government employees for suspected terror links, officials said.

Since 2020, the administration has dismissed 85 employees after surveillance found them aiding terrorist groups. "The move targets the roots of the terror ecosystem within government machinery," an official said.

Those sacked include Mohammad Ishfaq, a teacher; Tariq Ahmad Rah, a laboratory technician; Bashir Ahmad Mir, an assistant lineman; Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a Forest Department field worker; and Mohammad Yousuf, a Health Department driver. They were dismissed under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution, which allows termination without inquiry in the interest of state security. —*PTI*

The blaze broke out in the Balakote on Monday and spread to parts of the adjoining Mendhar by Tuesday, triggering multiple explosions *PHOTO: AI PIC*

J&K forest fire triggers landmine blasts

MENDHAR/JAMMU, 13 JAN

Nearly a dozen landmines exploded as a forest fire continued to rage along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, officials said.

The blaze broke out on Monday afternoon in the Basooni forward area of the Balakote sector and spread to parts of the adjoining Mendhar sector by Tuesday, triggering multiple explosions.

Officials said the landmines detonated after intense heat from the fire reached anti-infiltration minefields laid along the LoC.

Forward areas along the border are heavily mined as part of a layered obstacle system to prevent infiltration attempts from across the border.

In view of the heightened risk, security forces have strengthened multi-tier arrangements and intensified patrolling to guard against any attempts to exploit the situation, officials said.

Efforts are also underway to contain the fire, though difficult terrain and dry vegetation have hampered operations, they added. —*PTI*

SNOWLESS HIMALAYAS

In a first, the high-altitude peaks of Tungnath in Uttarakhand's Garhwal Himalayas have seen no snowfall through January. Situated at around 12,000 feet, the lack of snowfall has raised alarm among scientists. Experts say prolonged shortfalls in rain and snow are already affecting medicinal plant species. Rising temperatures due to global warming is causing faster snowmelt, which is leading to 'snow droughts' in the Himalayas

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Fear still rules the street as Iran eases few restrictions

Iranians could call abroad on mobile phones on Tuesday for the first time since communications were halted during a crackdown on nationwide protests. Iran eased some restrictions on its people and, for the first time in days, allowed them to make phone calls abroad via their mobile phones on Tuesday.

Several people in Tehran were able to call The Associated Press and speak to a journalist there. The AP bureau in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was unable to call those numbers back. The witnesses said SMS text messaging was down and that internet users in Iran could connect to government-approved websites locally, but not abroad.

The witnesses gave a brief glimpse into life on the streets of the Iranian capital over the four and a half days of being cut off from the world. They described seeing a heavy security presence in central Tehran.

Anti-riot police officers, wearing helmets and body armour, carried batons, shields, shotguns and tear gas launchers. They stood watch at major intersections. Nearby, the witnesses saw members of the Revolutionary Guard's all-volunteer Basij force, who similarly carried firearms and batons. Security officials in plainclothes were visible in public spaces as well.

Several banks and government offices were burned during the unrest, they said. ATMs had been smashed, and banks struggled to complete transactions without the internet, the witnesses added.

However, shops were open, though there was little foot traffic in the capital. Tehran's Grand Bazaar, where the demonstrations began 28 December, was to open Tuesday. However, a witness described speaking to multiple shopkeepers who said the security forces ordered them to reopen no matter what. Iranian state media had not acknowledged that order.

The witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Many remain concerned about a possible military strike by the US, even as President Donald Trump has said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington ***PHOTO: PTI***

Many remain concerned about a possible military strike by the US, even as President Donald Trump has said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington.

"My customers talk about Trump's reaction while wondering if he plans a military strike against the Islamic Republic," said shopkeeper Mahmoud. "I don't expect Trump or any other foreign country to care about the interests of Iranians."

Reza, a taxi driver, said protests also remain at the forefront of many.

"People — particularly young ones — are hopeless, but they talk about continuing the protests," he said.

On the streets, people also could be seen challenging plainclothes security officials, who were stopping passersby at random.

State television also read a statement about mortuary and morgue services being free — a signal that some likely charged high fees for the release of bodies amid the crackdown.

Iran says it communicated with Washington

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to the Qatar-funded satellite news network Al Jazeera in an interview aired Monday night, said he continued to communicate with US envoy Steve Witkoff.

The communication "continued before and after the protests and is still ongoing," Araghchi said. However, "Washington's proposed ideas and threats against our country are incompatible."

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Iran's public rhetoric diverges from the private messaging the administration has received from Tehran in recent days.

"I think the president has an interest in exploring those messages," Leavitt said. "However, with that said, the president has shown he's unafraid to use military options if and when he deems necessary, and nobody knows that better than Iran."

Meanwhile, pro-government demonstrators flooded the streets Monday in support of the theocracy, a show of force after days of protests directly challenging the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state television aired chants from the crowd, which appeared to number in the tens of thousands, who shouted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

Others cried out, "Death to the enemies of God!" Iran's attorney general has warned that anyone taking part in protests will be considered an "enemy of God," a death penalty charge.

Iran, through the country's parliamentary speaker, warned Sunday that the US military and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if Washington uses force to protect demonstrators.

More than 10,700 people have been detained over the two weeks of protests, said the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous unrest in recent years and gave the latest death toll early Tuesday. It relies on supporters in Iran cross-checking information. It said 512 of the dead were protesters and 134 were security force members.

With the internet down in Iran, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll. Iran's government hasn't offered overall casualty figures. *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا سالار

Trump's Greenland threat puts NATO unity at risk

President Donald Trump's repeated threats to seize control of Greenland are straining relations with US allies in NATO and have sparked a warning that doing so by force could spell the end of the world's biggest security alliance.

Tensions have routinely spiked among some of NATO's members over the decades, notably between neighbours Greece and Turkey. But it would set a dangerous precedent should its most powerful country, the United States, annex the territory of another ally.

"One way or the other, we're going to have Greenland," Trump reaffirmed on Sunday. The White House has not ruled out the use of military force. Trump said he wants to prevent Russia or China from taking over and that making a deal would be "easier."

Greenland is a semi-autonomous island that is part of the Danish realm. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that "if the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops … including our NATO."

Donald Trump said he wants to prevent Russia or China from taking over Greenland ***PHOTO: PTI***

DECADES OF DEFENDING THREATS

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed by 12 nations in 1949 to counter the security threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. NATO's deterrence works through a strong American troop presence in Europe, with US nuclear weapons stationed there.

Its ranks have grown since the founding Washington Treaty was signed to 32 countries after Sweden joined in 2024, worried by an increasingly aggressive Russia. Indeed, NATO officially considers its biggest threats to be Russia and international terrorism.

NATO's doors are open to any European country that wants to join and can meet the requirements and obligations. Importantly, NATO takes its decisions by consensus, so every member has a veto. The Trump administration has vetoed Ukraine's application.

NATO is built on the principle that an attack on any one of its ranks must be considered an attack on them all — the collective security guarantee enshrined in Article 5 of the treaty. The organisation's credibility depends on adversaries believing that all 32 allies will make good on that pledge.

It's a political commitment and not a legal obligation that can be enforced by any court. The only time it has ever been activated was in 2001, to support the United States in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

DEFENCE AGAINST OUTSIDERS

Trump said last year that he is committed to the Article 5 pledge, but he has also fuelled doubt about whether he would defend allies who don't spend enough on defence. However, his repeated threats against Greenland take things to a new level.

Article 5 would be moot in any US-Denmark fight as there would be no unanimity to activate it. Besides diplomacy, NATO has no obvious way of dealing with open conflict among its members. Should things get worse, Denmark could trigger Article 4 of the treaty for official consultations if it feels that its sovereignty or territorial integrity is threatened. Article 4 talks do not automatically lead to any action. A US attack is almost certain to divide NATO. This happened when the United States led an attack on Iraq in 2003, with Britain and Spain backing while France and Germany led a group of others vehemently opposed.

It's unclear which allies would side with Trump over Greenland.

AN ALLIANCE LED BY THE US

The United States is NATO's most powerful member. In real terms, it spends much more on defence than any other ally and far outweighs its partners in terms of military muscle. Washington has traditionally driven the agenda but has stepped back under Trump.

NATO is weaker without US leadership, troops, equipment or other military assets. It's almost inconceivable that any ally would go to war with it, let alone hope to win.

Day-to-day work at the alliance's Brussels headquarters is led by former Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

As NATO's top civilian official, he chairs meetings of ambassadors in the North Atlantic Council most weeks. He chairs other "NACs" at ministerial level and summits of heads of state and government. Rutte runs NATO HQ, encourages consensus and speaks on behalf of all 32 members. One of his main tasks is to ensure that the United States remains committed to NATO. As a result, he does not criticise Trump, and on Monday he sidestepped questions about Greenland and any NATO tensions over the island.

Asked whether NATO was in crisis over Greenland, Rutte said: "No, not at all."

NATO's military headquarters is based nearby in Mons, Belgium. It is always run by a top American officer. The current supreme allied commander, or SACEUR, is Air Force Lt. Gen Alexus Grynkewich. Trump is his commander in chief. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

FTA with EU to help boost India's exports to the 27-nation bloc

- India's cumulative FDI inflows from the EU during April 2000 to September 2024 were USD 117.4 billion, with about 6,000 EU firms present in India.

India and the European Union (EU) are negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA). Negotiations have reached the final stage.

If finalised, this will be the 19th trade deal for India. The FTA is expected to help boost the country's exports to the 27-nation bloc.

Since 2014, India has finalised seven trade pacts -- Mauritius (April 2021 implemented), Australia (December 2022 implemented), UAE (May 2022 implemented), Oman (signed in December 2025), UK (signed in July 2025), EFTA (implemented in October 2025 - Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), and New Zealand (talks concluded in December 2025).

IMPORTANCE OF THIS FTA

The imposition of high tariffs by the US has disrupted the global flow of goods. India is facing steep 50 per cent tariffs. The FTA is expected to help Indian exporters diversify their shipments. It will also help reduce dependence on China.

BENEFITS FOR INDIA AND THE EU

Tariffs or import duties are either reduced or eliminated under an FTA. Therefore, an FTA will open markets, align regulations between the two, and benefit key industries like technology, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles.

Lower duties will make Indian exports, including from labour-intensive sectors, such as garments, leather, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, more competitive in the EU. Similarly, Indian services exports, including telecommunications, business services, and transport, are also expected to grow significantly.

According to think tank GTRI, the EU will benefit from higher exports of aircraft and parts, electrical machinery, diamonds, and chemicals to India. European service sectors such as intellectual property, business services, and IT and telecommunications may also see gains.

BILATERAL TRADE

The FTA will significantly boost two-way trade between India and the EU.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25 (exports worth USD 75.85 billion and imports USD 60.68 billion), making it the largest trading partner for goods.

The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, and the bloc's exports to India constitute 9 per cent of its total overseas shipments.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

In 2023-24, India exported USD 76 billion in goods and USD 30 billion in services to the EU, while the EU exported USD 61.5 billion in goods and USD 23 billion in services to India.

Within the EU, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Poland and the Netherlands are key destinations for Indian exporters.

As per reports, the EU, with a GDP of about USD 19.5 trillion (France, Italy, Germany and Spain are major countries) and a population of over 450 million, is a major global trade player, exporting about USD 2.9 trillion and importing more than USD 2.6 trillion annually.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, exported USD 437 billion in goods and USD 387.5 billion in services. It imported goods worth USD 720 billion and USD 195 billion worth of services in 2024-25.

INDIA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

Major exports are petroleum products (Diesel and ATF), electronics (including smartphones), textiles, machinery and computers, organic chemicals, iron and steel, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts.

Currently, India's textile exports to the EU face tariffs between 12-16 per cent, making Indian products less competitive compared to exports from countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, which enjoy preferential market access under EU trade agreements, a GTRI report has said.

Main imports are Machinery, computers (including turbojets), electronics (including mobile phone parts and integrated circuits), aircraft, medical devices, scientific instruments, rough diamonds, organic chemicals, plastics, iron and steel, cars, and auto parts. India's key services exports to the EU are business services, telecommunication and IT, transportation services, while imports are intellectual property services, telecommunication and IT.

ALCOHOL TRADE

Both regions are key players in this segment. India's exports to the EU in 2023-24 included wines (USD 1.5 million), blended whiskeys, vodka, brandy, and liqueurs (USD 64.9 million). Imports included wines (USD 412.4 million), blended whiskeys, brandy, gin, tequila, vodka, and liqueurs (USD 22.3 million).

FDI INFLOWS

India's cumulative FDI inflows from the EU during April 2000 to September 2024 were USD 117.4 billion, with about 6,000 EU firms present in India. FDI from the EU represented 16.6 per cent of the cumulative amount of FDI equity inflow from all countries, which stood at USD 708.6 billion.

According to GTRI, India's FDI outflows to the EU were valued at about USD 40.04 billion from April 2000 to March 2024.

India mainly receives FDI from the Netherland (USD 55 billion) during April 2000 and September 2025), Germany (USD 15.4 billion), France (USD 12 billion), Spain (4.3 billion), Belgium (USD 4.1 billion), Italy (3.65 billion), Sweden (USD 2.8 billion), Denmark (USD 1.44 billion), and Poland (USD 788.75 million). *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Nepal Prez calls 1st Assembly session after Gen Z protest

KATHMANDU, 13 JAN

Nepal President Ram Chandra Paudel has summoned a session of the National Assembly for next week. This will be the first session since the September Gen Z protest and the first since the dissolution of the House of Representatives. According to Ritesh Kumar Shakya, spokesperson for the President's Office, the President has called the National Assembly session for 11am on 18 January, based on the recommendation of the Cabinet. As per constitutional provisions, the President summons a session of the National Assembly on the Cabinet's recommendation. Eak Ram Giri, spokesperson for the Federal Parliament Secretariat said that the National Assembly Meeting will be held at the hall of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, which is located within Singha Durbar *—ANI*

Pak and Indonesia discuss defence cooperation

ISLAMABAD, 13 JAN

Pakistan and Indonesia have discussed defence cooperation amidst reports about Jakarta joining the list of nations interested in buying JF-17 Thunder jets. Lieutenant General Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin (Retd), Minister of Defence of Indonesia, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on Monday at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi, according to an overnight statement by the army. "The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, evolving regional and global security dynamics, and exploration of avenues for enhancing bilateral defence cooperation," it said. The Indonesian defence minister lauded professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism while Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fostering strong and enduring defence relationship with Indonesia. *—PTI*

In tractors, French farmers protest EU trade deal

PARIS, 13 JAN

French farmers steered 350 tractors on Tuesday over cobblestoned Paris avenues toward Parliament to protest low incomes and an EU trade deal with South America that they worry will effect livelihoods. The farmers say their earnings are don't cover rising costs for fuel, fertiliser, animal feed and 'heavier' environmental rules. Farmers across the EU have long denounced the EU's trade deal with the nations of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, arguing it would flood the market with cheaper imports of beef, poultry, sugar and other farm products, undercutting local producers and driving prices down further. *—PTI*

1,00,000 El Paso residents face water shortage

EL PASO, 13 JAN

More than 1,00,000 residents in the Texas border city of El Paso were left with little to no water after a main break over the weekend, and it was expected to take till mid-week for normalcy, officials said. The break in the 36-inch water main line happened late Saturday night in El Paso, which has a population of about 700,000, officials said. Gilbert Trejo, an official with El Paso Water, called it "an event of unprecedented proportion". Trejo said the break was made even more disastrous because of "the way the pipeline itself was designed along with how different connections of other smaller lines were made to it." *—PTI*

Pahlavi asks Trump to act soon against Iran regime

Iran searches for Starlink terminals; EU mulls sanctions

WASHINGTON/DUBAI, 13 JAN

Iran's exiled crown prince Reza Pahlavi appealed to US President Donald Trump to act "sooner rather than later" against Iran's clerical leadership, as protests continue across the country. "We need action to be taken," he said. "The best way to ensure that there will be less people killed in Iran is to intervene sooner, so this regime finally collapses and puts an end to all the problems that we are facing,"

Pahlavi has been living in exile since his father, Iran's last Shah, was toppled in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pahlavi said he has been in contact with the Trump administration and urged protesters to stay on the streets.

However, when asked if he was responsible for the high death toll, he said, "This is a war and war has casualties". Pahlavi has been saying he could head Iran if Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was ousted. He said he would merely act as a bridge to democracy.

The protests, which erupted over the Iran's falling Rial morphed into massive anti-government rallies have spread across the country.

Citizens who could communicate after the communication blackout was lifted, described a heavy security presence in central Tehran, burned government buildings, smashed ATMs.

Vehicles set ablaze amid protest in Iran; In a viral video, a security personnel is seen shooting at protesters *PHOTO: X*

It also appeared that security service personnel were searching for Starlink terminals as people in northern Tehran reported authorities raiding apartment buildings with satellite dishes.

Trump had earlier said he would speak to Elon Musk about using Starlink to circumvent the internet blackout.

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that the European Union will move quickly to propose additional sanctions against those linked to the crackdown on demonstrations in Iran, following Trump's 25 per cent tariffs on Iran's allies. Tensions were high across Iran, with both the US and Israel poised and ready to strike. *—Agencies*

CHINA FUMES AT US' IRAN TARIFF

BEIJING, 13 JAN

China, the largest buyer of Iranian oil, warned counter measures against US President Donald Trump's decision to impose 25 per cent tariffs on countries trading with Iran.

"There are no winners in a tariff war, and China will firmly safeguard its own legitimate and lawful rights and interests," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said while reacting to Trump's threat.

China is already grappling with the fall of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, one of its closest allies. His fall brought about an overnight end to Venezuela's allegiance to Beijing, which, according to reports, invested over USD 106 billion in the Latin American country.

According to data compiled by the intelligence firm Kpler, China imported around 400,000 barrels of Venezuelan oil per day last year for far a cheaper prices.

Meanwhile, China has also purchased, on average 1.38 million barrels per day of Iranian oil last year, which constituted about 80 per cent of Iranian oil. *—ANI*

US tells citizens to 'leave now' before Trump strikes Iran

A pro-government rally in Iran. State-media in Iran has been focusing pro-government rally coverage *PHOTO: X @KHAMENEI_FA*

WASHINGTON, 13 JAN

The US Virtual Embassy in Iran told all its citizens to "leave Iran now" as White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said that President Donald Trump has kept airstrikes as one of the many options on the table to hit the Islamic Republic.

Trump was also briefed by military officials on several possible operations, including integrated military, cyber, and psychological operations. Trump said that Iran had crossed the "red line" of killing protesters.

However, Leavitt said that "Diplomacy is always the first option for the President".

Air power and long-range missile capabilities remain key components of any potential military action, according to officials familiar with the matter, officials said.

Pentagon planners have also outlined cyber operations and psychological warfare measures to disrupt Iran's command-and-control systems, communications networks, and state-run media outlets.

Meanwhile, the US Embassy said that the protests across Iran "may turn violent".

Trump was earlier briefed on targeted strikes on select sites in Tehran, including non-military infrastructure linked to the regime's internal security apparatus. *—ANI*

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia fired nearly 300 drones at Ukraine, most of which were Iranian-made Shahed drones *PHOTO: UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE*

US slams Russia as 4 killed in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS/ KYIV, 13 JAN

The US accused Russia of a "dangerous and inexplicable escalation" of its nearly four-year war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian launched a barrage of missiles and drones at Ukraine, killing at least 4 people and severely impacting the nation's power-grid, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday.

US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations, Tammy Bruce, on Monday singled out Russia's launch of a nuclear-capable Oreshnik ballistic missile last week close to Ukraine's border with Poland, a NATO ally. Tammy told an emergency meeting of the Security Council that the US deplores"staggering number of casualties".

The comments come amid the Trump administration's push for a ceasefire, which appears to have stalled after Washington's attacks on Venezuela and oil tankers in the North Atlantic.

MAJOR BOMBARDMENT

Russia fired almost 300 drones, 18 ballistic missiles and seven cruise missiles at eight regions in Ukraine overnight, Zelenskyy said, adding that Moscow was targeting Ukraine's power grid.

Several hundred thousand households were without power in the Kyiv region. The daytime temperature in the capital was -12 C. The streets were covered with ice, and the city rumbled with the noise from generators. *—PTI*

We're screwed if SC strikes down tariffs, says Trump

WASHINGTON, 13 JAN

President Donald Trump on Monday said the US would be "screwed" if the Supreme Court rules against his administration's tariff policies. He said such a scenario would be a "complete mess" that could cost trillions of dollars.

The Supreme Court is expected to release its opinions on Wednesday.

Trump said on Truth Social the amount that the US could be forced to repay would run into "many Hundreds of Billions of Dollars".

"(And) that doesn't include the amount of 'payback' that Countries and Companies would require for the Investments they are making on building Plants, Factories, and Equipment, for the purpose of being able to avoid the payment of Tariffs," Trump said. "When these Investments are added, we are talking about Trillions of Dollars! It would be a complete mess, and almost impossible for our Country to pay," he added.

1,00,000

US visas were revoked in 2025, including 8,000 student permits

The case, Learning Resources Vs Trump, will determine whether a US President can invoke powers under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose tariffs without Congressional approval, having sweeping implications on Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs. *—ANI*

Minnesota sues govt over ICE surge

The state of Minnesota and its two largest cities are suing the Trump administration to try and stop a surge in federal immigration enforcement (ICE). This comes after an American citizen, Renée Goode, was shot dead by an ICE officer. About 2,000 immigration officers have been deployed in Minesota.

Minneapolis anti-ICE protest *PHOTO: PTI*

BBC asks Florida court to dismiss Don's plaint

The BBC will ask a Florida court to throw out Trump's USD 10 billion lawsuit against the British broadcaster. Trump had filed a lawsuit in December, alleging that the BBC's edit of his 6 January, 2021, speech defamed him, despite his supporters storming Capitol Hill.

US lawmaker proposes bill to make Greenland 51st state

Republican Congressman Randy Fine proposed a bill to make Greenland the 51st state, amid Trump's push to acquire the territory. The Greenland Annexation and Statehood Act is a 'landmark legislation', allowing Trump to take any and all steps to annex Greenland.

'AI ACCELERATION STRATEGY'

Pentagon embraces Grok despite global outcry

WASHINGTON, 13 JAN

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said that Elon Musk's Grok will join Google's generative AI engine in operating inside the Pentagon network, despite the global backlash against the artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot.

Hegseth's announcement is part of a broader push to feed as much of the military's data as possible into AI systems.

"Very soon we will have the world's leading AI models on every unclassified and classified network throughout our department," Hegseth said in a speech at Musk's space flight company, SpaceX, in South Texas, on Monday.

The announcement comes just days after Grok, which is embedded into X, drew flack for generating highly sexualised deepfake images of people without their consent.

Malaysia and Indonesia have blocked Grok, while the UK's independent online safety watchdog announced an investigation on Monday. India has also clamped down on the chatbot.

Grok then limited image generation and editing to paying users.

Hegseth said Grok will go live inside the Defence Department later this month and announced that he would "make all appropriate data" from the military's IT systems available for "AI exploitation."

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth with tech tycoon Elon Musk at a SpaceX facility in South Texas, on Monday *PHOTO: X/@SECWAR*

"AI is only as good as the data that it receives," Hegseth said. He noted that the Pentagon possesses "combat-proven operational data from two decades of military and intelligence operations."

Hegseth also dismissed any AI models "that won't allow you to fight wars," as he batted for AI "without ideological constraints".

The 'AI Acceleration Strategy', Hegseth said, was part of the War Department's push to ensure that America's military dominates the AI field. *—PTI*

IRAQ PM RESIGNS AMID IMPASSE, MASSIVE PROTESTS

BAGHDAD, 13 JAN

Iraq's caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani has stepped aside to allow former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki to take charge, as political wrangling continues over the formation of a new government following the November parliamentary elections, amid massive protests over the past few weeks.

Al-Sudani's Reconstruction and Development Coalition secured the largest share with 46 seats in the 329-seat parliament, while al-Maliki's coalition garnered 30 seats. Both leaders sought support from the Coordination Framework, a group of Iran-backed Shiite parties that previously enabled al-Sudani's rise to power. As talks unfolded, the Coordination Framework was unable choose a clear frontrunner, leading to a decision by the candidates themselves, wherein al-Sudani agreed to step aside for al-Maliki.

The new government will grapple with significant economic and political challenges.

In a related development, Judge Faiq Zidan, head of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council, articulated the need for exclusive state control over weapons following the defeat of terrorism, stating, "a functioning state depends on respect for the law." *—PTI*

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in Nara met in Japan on Tuesday *PHOTO: KYODO*

Japan, S Korean leaders meet amid Taiwan row

NARA, 13 JAN

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi agreed to step up cooperation as the region has been under increasing turmoil over China's military presence around Taiwan.

Lee recently visited China where he met President Xi Jinping and reaffirmed his belief of the One-China policy, which says that the sovereign island is part of Beijing. However, Takaichi has said that any Chinese military aggression on Taiwan would force a Japanese response.

"I believe cooperation between Korea and Japan is now more important than ever," Lee said on Tuesday.

Takaichi said she renewed her determination to further improve Japan's relations with South Korea "as I believe the two countries should cooperate and contribute to the stability in the region."

Tuesday's meeting was also intended to focus on trade and the challenges of China and North Korea, as well as efforts to deepen trust between the two countries.

Japan and South Korea, both key US allies, must also figure out how to deal with President Trump's unpredictable diplomacy. *—PTI*

Apple partners with Google's AI bot Gemini to help smarten up Siri

NEW YORK, 13 JAN

Apple will rely on Google to help finish its efforts to smarten up its virtual assistant Siri and bring other artificial intelligence features to the iPhone as the trendsetting company plays catch-up in technology's latest craze.

The deal allowing Apple to tap into Google's AI technology was disclosed Monday in a joint statement from the Silicon Valley powerhouses. The partnership will draw upon Google's Gemini technology to customise a suite of AI features dubbed "Apple Intelligence" on the iPhone and other products.

After Google and others took the early lead in the AI race, Apple promised to plant its first big stake in the field with an array of new features that were supposed to be coming to the iPhone in 2024 as part of a ballyhooed software upgrade. But many of Apple's AI features remain in the development phase, while Google and Samsung have been rolling out more of the technology on their own devices. One of the most glaring AI omissions on the iPhone has been a promised overhaul of Siri that was supposed to transform often-confused assistant into more conversational & versatile multitasker.

Google even subtly mocked the iPhone's AI shortcomings in ads promoting the release of its latest Pixel phone last summer.

> **I'm feeling tired and would prefer to reduce the scope of my responsibilities**
>
> -Tim Cook, Apple CEO

Getting Apple to endorse its AI implicitly represents a coup for Google, which has been steadily releasing more features built on its Gemini technology in its search engine and Gmail. The progress has intensified Google's competition with OpenAI and its ChatGPT chatbot, which already has a deal with Apple that makes it an option on the iPhone.

Alphabet marked a milestone Monday when it surpassed a market value of $4 trillion for the first time during early morning trading before slipping back below that threshold later in the session. *—PTI*

Apple CEO Tim Cook with Google CEO Sundar Pichai at a dinner meeting
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Exporters worried over Trump's additional 25% tariffs threat

He said that countries doing trade with Iran will pay additional tariffs

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Exporters are keeping their fingers crossed on the impact of recent announcement made by US President Donald Trump that Washington will impose additional 25 per cent duty on countries trading with Iran.

The exact impact of the additional tariff will be only known after a notification is issued by the Trump administration, said exporters.

Indian exporters are already reeling under the impact of the steep 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the US.

Trump has announced that any country doing business with Iran will have to pay a 25 per cent tariff on its trade with Washington, a move that could impact Tehran's major trading partners such as India, China and the UAE.

Exporters' body FIEO on Tuesday said domestic firms are complying with all sanctions related to trade with Iran, but a clear clarification on Trump's announcement that countries trading with Iran may face a 25 per cent tariff would help asses the impact of the warning.

The announcement by Trump could impact India-Iran trade relations.

Additionally, FIEO said Trump's 25 per cent duty will almost have no impact on India.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said that Indian companies and banks are in full and demonstrable compliance of OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control) sanctions on Iran, engaging exclusively in clearly permitted humanitarian trade, mainly in food and pharmaceuticals. "There is, therefore, no basis to anticipate any adverse impact on India," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said.

India had a total trade of USD 1.68 billion with Iran in 2024-25 (April-March), which included USD 1.24 billion in exports primarily from the farm sector. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AI

INDIA FALLS TO NO. 3 IN RUSSIAN CRUDE IMPORTS: CREA REPORT

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

India fell to third place among buyers of Russian fossil fuels in December 2025 after Reliance Industries and state-owned refiners sharply cut crude oil imports, a European think tank said on Tuesday.

The total Russian hydrocarbon imports by India stood at 2.3 billion euros in December, down from 3.3 billion euros in the preceding month, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

"Turkiye displaced India as the second largest importer, purchasing Euro 2.6 billion of Russian hydrocarbons in December," it said.

China remained the top buyer, accounting for 48 per cent (Euro 6 billion) of Russia's export revenues from the top five importers.

"India was the third highest buyer of Russian fossil fuels, importing a total of Euro 2.3 billion of Russian hydrocarbons in December," CREA said."Crude oil constituted 78 per cent of India's purchases, totalling Euro 1.8 billion. Coal (Euro 424 million) and oil products (Euro 82 million) constituted the remainder of India's monthly imports."

The US has imposed sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, two of the largest oil producers in Russia, to cut off the Kremlin's resources for funding the Ukraine war. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee declines 6P, close at 90.23 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 13 JAN

The rupee declined 6 paise to close at 90.23 against the US dollar on Tuesday, as a rebound in crude oil and high metal prices, coupled with a cautious market environment, dented investor sentiments. Forex traders said incessant outflow of foreign funds amid geopolitical tensions and weak equity markets also put pressure on the Indian currency. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.24 and touched the intra-day low of 90.30 against the greenback. The currency ended the session at 90.23 against the dollar, down 6 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee ended 1 paisa higher at 90.17 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent higher at 98.95. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,499.81 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. *—PTI*

City to host 3-day B2B Expo starting 20 January

BENGALURU, 13 JAN

An Integrated B2B Expo for the food, beverage, HoReCa, bakery, processing, packaging and hospitality sectors, to be held from 20 to 22 January in the City, Synergy Exposures & Events said on Tuesday. The three-day event at Tripura Vasini, Palace Grounds aims to bring the entire food and hospitality value chain under one roof, offering end-to-end solutions for procurement, innovation and business growth. It will host multiple integrated exhibitions, including the Food & Drink Processing Expo supported by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, and the Bakers Technology Fair backed by the Ministry of MSME under the PMS Scheme, the organisers said. "Synergy Exposures' Mega Integrated B2B Expo is designed to enable meaningful buyer-seller interactions," said Sasi Kumar G, Vice President, Synergy Exposures. *—PTI*

Govt dismisses India-Afghan trade suspension claims

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The government on Tuesday dismissed claims by some Pakistani social media accounts that India has suspended trade operations with Afghanistan due to unrest in Iran, saying the reports were completely false. It said that a fabricated letter is being circulated by Pakistani propaganda accounts on the matter. Iran is witnessing widespread nationwide protests. "A fabricated letter is being circulated by #Pakistani propaganda accounts, falsely claiming that India has temporarily suspended trade operations with #Afghanistan due to escalating unrest in #Iran," PIB Fact Check said in a social media post. In 2024-25, India's exports to Afghanistan stood at USD 318.91 million, while imports were aggregated at USD 689.81 million. *—PTI*

'Venezuela crisis won't sway oil cost'

Crisil Ratings on Tuesday said recent events in Venezuela are unlikely to have any significant near-term impact on global crude oil prices, as the country accounts for just 1.5 per cent of global supply. A US military operation in early January captured President Nicolas Maduro on drug-related charges, creating uncertainty in the nation, which holds substantial proven oil reserves.

Brent crude has remained stable, slightly above USD 60 a barrel. For India, the effect is minimal, as Venezuelan imports account for less than 0.25 per cent of total imports, with crude oil making up 90 per cent of this. Exports to Venezuela were below Rs 2,000 crore in 2025. *—PTI*

'Iran unrest disrupts Indian basmati exports'

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Civil unrest in Iran has begun to affect India's basmati rice exports, leading to a sharp fall in domestic prices as exporters face delayed payments and growing uncertainty, an industry body said on Tuesday.

The Indian Rice Exporters Federation (IREF) advised exporters to reassess exposure to Iranian contracts and shift to secured payment mechanisms, warning against holding large inventories meant for Iran.

Trade data showed India exported basmati rice worth USD 468.10 million, or 5.99 lakh tonnes, to Iran between April and November of the 2025–26 financial year.

Iran is India's largest basmati market, but instability has disrupted orders, payments and shipping schedules this year.

The impact is now visible in domestic mandis, with prices of key varieties falling over the past week. Basmati 1121 dropped to Rs 80 per kg from Rs 85, while varieties 1509 and 1718 declined to Rs 65 from Rs 70. *—PTI*

Silver hits record of ₹2.7L/kg; gold climbs to ₹1.45L/10g

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Silver prices surged by Rs 6,000 to hit a fresh lifetime high of Rs 2,71,000 per kg in the national capital on Tuesday, and gold climbed to yet another record of Rs 1,45,000 per 10 grams amid sustained buying by the stockists.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white precious metal extended its gains for the third consecutive day by jumping Rs 6,000, or 2.3 per cent, to Rs 2,71,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes).

On Monday, the metal had surged by Rs 15,000, or 6 per cent, to touch a lifetime high of Rs 2,65,000 per kg from its close of Rs 2,50,000 per kg on Friday.

So far this year, silver has appreciated by Rs 32,000, or 13.4 per cent, from Rs 2,39,000 per kilogram recorded on December 31, 2025.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also rose by Rs 400 to hit a fresh record of Rs 1,45,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. In the previous session, the yellow precious metal had climbed Rs 2,900 to reach Rs 1,44,600 per 10 grams.

Traders attributed the surge to sustained demand for safe-haven assets amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

In the global markets, spot gold eased by USD 10.93, or 0.24 per cent, to USD 4,586.49 per ounce, after touching a record of USD 4,630.47 per ounce on Monday.

Spot silver was traded 0.58 per cent higher at USD 85.64 per ounce in the overseas trade. *—PTI*

Bharat Coking Coal IPO subscribed 146.81 times on final day

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The initial public offering of Bharat Coking Coal Ltd got subscribed a massive 146.81 times on the final day of bidding on Tuesday, led by heavy investors' participation.

The Rs 1,071-crore IPO received bids for 50,93,44,51,200 shares against 34,69,46,500 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

The portion meant for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) attracted a whopping 310.81 times subscription. Non-institutional investors' quota fetched 258.04 times subscription, and the category for retail individual investors (RIIs) received 49.26 times subscription.

The IPO of Bharat Coking Coal Ltd got fully subscribed within minutes of opening for bidding on Friday.

Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL) on Thursday said it has mobilised over Rs 273 crore from anchor investors.

The company's Rs 1,071-crore IPO is the first mainboard issue of 2026.

The price band for the IPO has been fixed at Rs 21-23 per share, and at the higher end, the company is valued at over Rs 10,700 crore.

According to the red herring prospectus (RHP), the public issue is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) of 46.57 crore equity shares by Coal India.

BCCL's issue comes against the backdrop of a blockbuster year for the primary market. *—PTI*

Mkts end lower on foreign fund outflows, selling in blue-chips

MUMBAI, 13 JAN

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday after a day's breather, as investors pared exposure to index majors Reliance Industries, L&T and Bharti Airtel amid global tariff-related concerns.

Market sentiment was also sluggish due to a weak start to the earnings season and continued flight of foreign capital from Indian markets, according to traders.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 250.48 points, or 0.30 per cent, to settle at 83,627.69. During the day, it declined 615.38 points, or 0.73 per cent, to 83,262.79.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 57.95 points or 0.22 per cent to 25,732.30.

The session began on a negative note following disappointing results from IT major TCS and drifted lower for most of the session, though a rebound in the final hour trimmed some losses.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Trent, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, ITC, Adani Ports and Bharat Electronics were among the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra, State Bank of India and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers. *—PTI*

WITH 80% BIZ IMPROVED

'Women-led MSMEs expecting biz growth'

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Women-led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are emerging as a strong pillar of India's small business recovery, with 87 per cent expecting business growth in 2026, according to NeoGrowth's MSME Business Confidence Study 2026.

The study shows that 80 per cent of women entrepreneurs reported an improvement in business performance in recent months, driven by festive demand, better payment flows, and improving operating conditions.

Confidence among women-led MSMEs is not just higher, but also more structured, with a sharper focus on people planning, financial preparedness, and sustainable scale.

Notably, 58 per cent of women-led MSMEs plan to take a business loan in 2026, signalling expansion-led intent rather than distress borrowing.

Their growth priorities extend beyond opening new outlets to include hiring and training staff, improving store aesthetics, and strengthening financial planning, pointing to a maturing approach to entrepreneurship. *—ANI*

Electronics exports crossed Rs 4L cr in 2025: Vaishnaw

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Electronics exports from the country have crossed Rs 4 lakh crore in 2025 and are expected to grow when four semiconductor plants begin production this year.

"Electronics exports crossed Rs 4 lakh crore in 2025, creating jobs and bringing foreign exchange. Momentum will continue in 2026 as four semiconductor plants come into commercial production," Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a social media post on Monday.

According to official estimates, electronic production reached around Rs 11.3 crore and exports were at around Rs 3.3 lakh crore in 2024-25.

The minister shared a report that states that iPhone exports from India have hit Rs 2.03 lakh crore in 2025, which is almost double that of Rs 1.1 lakh crore Apple exported in the calendar year 2024. *—PTI*

Ease GST, credit norms for MSEs: FACSI urges FM

KOLKATA, 13 JAN

The Federation of Associations of Cottage and Small Industries (FACSI) has urged the Centre to give tax, credit and regulatory relief measures for micro and small enterprises in the 2026-27 Union Budget, to sustain growth and strengthen their role in the industrial ecosystem.

In a pre-budget letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, FACSI president HK Guha said the recommendations were framed after consultations with various associations of entrepreneurs and MSE groups across the country.

Among the key demands, the industry body has sought the constitution of an exclusive council for small and micro enterprises under the Ministry of MSME, a higher exemption threshold under the GST regime and a single, simplified GST return for small units.

FACSI has also called for statutory collateral-free lending of up to Rs 1 crore for MSEs at an interest cap of 6-7 per cent, along with interest subvention during periods of financial stress, and automatic renewal of working capital limits for units complying with banking norms. *—PTI*

Renewable sector seeks support for R&D

Ahead of the FY27 Union Budget, India's renewable energy sector is seeking incentives for R&D and domestic manufacturing of ingots and wafers, alongside measures to strengthen transmission infrastructure and green finance. Leaders emphasise support for distributed solar, hybrid systems, and storage solutions, as well as recycling of solar modules & batteries. *—PTI*

Deloitte suggests duty reforms for boosting exports

Deloitte India on Tuesday urged rationalising import duties and increasing budget allocations to boost domestic manufacturing and exports. It recommended SEZ reforms, easing sub-contracting, exempting value addition from customs duty, and a limited amnesty to enhance competitiveness. Partner Gulzar Didwania suggested lowering duties on parts. *—PTI*

Paris FC knocks out holder PSG from French Cup

PARIS, 13 JAN

Paris FC knocked out Paris Saint-Germain from the French Cup after an historic snatch-and-grab triumph that marked a first ever win against its richer and more illustrious neighbor. PSG, the record 16-time winner of the Coupe de France, has failed to make the last 32 for the first time since the 2012-13 season. Cup holder PSG dominated throughout at home on Monday but could not make its pressure count and it paid a price when Paris FC grabbed the only goal in the 74th minute. Former PSG winger Jonathan Ikoné poked the ball home on a counterattack, a month after he scored all three goals in Paris FC's fifth-round win at US Raon-l'Étape. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Venus Williams loses in 1st round of Hobart event

HOBART, 13 JAN

Venus Williams lost 6-4, 6-3 to Tatjana Maria in the first round of the Hobart International on Tuesday, days before the Australian Open. The 45-year-old, who received a wild-card for both events, is ranked 576th, while sixth-seeded Maria is 42nd. Williams broke Maria's serve in the opening set but dropped serve twice, giving the set to Maria, who then secured victory with a single break in the second set. Williams has reached the Australian Open final twice, in 2003 and 2017, and will become the oldest player in the Open era at Melbourne Park. Also in Hobart, Barbora Krejcíková lost 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4) to Peyton Stearns. *—PTI*

Ex-Corsican leader, soccer club president killed

PARIS, 13 JAN

Alain Orsoni, 71, former Corsican nationalist leader and ex-president of football club AC Ajaccio, was shot dead during his mother's funeral in Corsica, French media reported, citing judicial sources. Orsoni had been a leading figure in the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) in the 1980s before founding the Movement for Self-Determination (MPA). He left the island in 1996 amid infighting within the nationalist movement and spent several years in exile before returning. Ajaccio public prosecutor Nicolas Septe has opened an investigation into murder by an organised gang. Father Roger Polge, who officiated the funeral, said: "Suddenly we heard a gunshot, and Alain collapsed, dead." *—PTI*

Shooting Federation shuns rape-accused coach

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Indian shooting federation Chief Kalikesh Singh Deo has said the body has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual misconduct and assured full cooperation to the agencies investigating the alleged sexual assault of a minor shooter by national coach Ankush Bhardwaj. Pistol coach Bhardwaj, a resident of Mohali, has been booked under Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for aggravated sexual assault and Section 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for criminal intimidation. A 17-year-old shooter in Faridabad has registered an FIR against her coach. Police said two teams from the crime unit and the women's police station were conducting raids to nab the accused. The shooter, training under Bhardwaj since August last year, alleged that the coach assaulted her in a hotel room after the National Championships event last month and threatened to sabotage her career if she spoke about it. *—PTI*

Confident India eye ODI series win against Kiwis

All eyes on Kohli's good form as injury worries haunt team

RAJKOT, 13 JAN

Virat Kohli's imperious form has helped India ride out mounting injury concerns as they close in on sealing the ODI series against New Zealand in the second match on Wednesday. India took a 1-0 lead with a four-wicket win in the opener at Vadodara, but the victory came at a cost, with Washington Sundar ruled out of the remainder of the series due to a side strain.

The selectors have drafted in Delhi all-rounder Ayush Badoni, while Nitish Kumar Reddy is likely to feature in the playing XI, in line with head coach Gautam Gambhir's preference for multi-skilled players. Injury worries had begun even before the first ODI, with Rishabh Pant ruled out of the series after being struck while batting in practice. Dhruv Jurel was named as his replacement and remains an option either as wicketkeeper or specialist batter.

India will be keen to avoid further setbacks with the T20 World Cup less than a month away. While the T20 squad will look different, some players overlap, including Tilak Varma, who is sidelined for at least the first three T20Is with a groin injury.

Virat Kohli narrowly missed his 54th ODI century with a sublime 93 in the opener on 11 January *PHOTO: PTI*

For now, however, the series revolves around veterans Kohli and Rohit Sharma, both enjoying the final leg of glittering international careers. Kohli narrowly missed his 54th ODI century with a sublime 93 in the opener, an innings that underlined his confidence and freedom at the crease. Rohit's attacking start, alongside half-centuries from captain Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer, ensured India remained in control despite a brief middle-order wobble.

India would still like improvement from their bowlers, particularly the spinners, who struggled for grip in Vadodara. The pacers' clever use of slower deliveries proved decisive, and the spinners will hope for more assistance at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.

New Zealand, despite defeat, drew positives from strong performances by Devon Conway, Henry Nicholls and Daryl Mitchell, while Kyle Jamieson's four-wicket burst briefly put India under pressure. However, missed chances proved costly, and the visitors will need a sharper display to level the series. *—PTI*

- India will be keen to avoid further setbacks with the T20 World Cup less than a month away. While the T20 squad will look different, some players overlap, including Tilak Varma, who is sidelined for at least the first three T20Is with a groin injury.

REFUSES TO BUDGE

BCB says ICC reluctant to shift games out of India

DHAKA, 13 JAN

The ICC on Tuesday "requested" the Bangladesh Cricket Board to reconsider its demand of shifting the country's T20 World Cup matches out of India, but the BCB has refused to back down, reiterating its security concerns.

In a statement, the BCB said the board's position remains unchanged despite the ICC's reluctance to entertain its request and both parties will continue to "explore possible solutions".

The BCB has written to the ICC multiple times demanding that its World Cup games be shifted out of India due to security concerns but considering that the schedule for the T20 showpiece beginning on 7 February 7 has been finalised, the world body is unlikely to relent.

"While the ICC highlighted that the tournament itinerary has already been announced and requested the BCB to reconsider its stance, the Board's position remains unchanged. Both parties agreed that discussions will continue to explore possible solutions," the BCB said.

"The BCB remains committed to safeguarding the well-being of its players, officials and staff while engaging constructively with the ICC to address the matter," said the BCB after its officials attended the video conference with ICC.

BCB asked for a relocation after the BCCI instructed Kolkata Knight Riders to release pacer Mustafizur Rahman from its IPL 2026 roster amid violence against Hindus here. Following Mustafizur's removal, an irate Bangladesh government banned IPL's broadcast in the country.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play three games in Kolkata and one in Mumbai during the league stage. *—PTI*

Delhi Capitals, UP Warriorz eye powerplay gains

NAVI MUMBAI, 13 JAN

UP Warriorz need to sort out their top-order while Delhi Capitals would aim to improve their powerplay bowling as both sides look for their first win in the Women's Premier League here on Wednesday.

Delhi Capitals, the losing finalists of the first three seasons, have not made an ideal start under the new leadership of Jemimah Rodrigues. It is still early days but Rodrigues would be desperate to get their campaign back on track.

Their bowling in the powerplay has a left a lot to be desired and that is the main area of improvement going into their third fixture. "I think definitely our powerplay bowling. I think we need to get our plans more sorted. But again, it's tough to bowl when Sophie Devine is in such great form," Rodrigues said after the loss to Gujarat Giants.

UP Warriorz, on the other hand, need to bat well in the powerplay. Harleen Deol and Kiran Navgire have opened alongside Meg Lanning in the first two games but both moves did not work. The team management needs to settle the issue on Lanning's partner and give her a reasonable *—PTI*

- "There are definitely areas we need to tidy up - particularly at the top of the order, myself included. We had too many dot balls early," skipper Lanning said after the RCB loss.

Aus' Alyssa Healy to retire from international cricket

SYDNEY, 13 JAN

Alyssa Healy, one of the finest cricketers to have played for Australia, will retire from the game following the home series against India in March.

The 35-year-old will lead the Australian time one final time in the three ODIs and the one off women's Test in Perth. Healy won't be part of the T20s against India as she will not be around for the T20 World Cup in the UK later this year.

"It's with mixed emotions that the upcoming India series will be my last for Australia," Healy, one of the most destructive batters in the women's game, said. Considering she has won eight world titles, six in the T20 format and two in one-day cricket, losing the semi-finals to eventual winners in the ODI World Cup last year was a disappointing outcome for Healy and her team.

The wicket-keeper batter has represented Australia in 10 Tests, 123 ODIs and 162 T20 Internationals. She has so far scored 489 Test runs at an average of 30.56, 3563 ODI runs at 35.98 with seven hundreds and 3054 at 25.45 with one century in T20Is. *—PTI*

Carlsen says yes to Norway Chess, Oslo to host event

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Chess icon Magnus Carlsen has put to rest speculation over his participation in the upcoming Norway Chess tournament, with the 20-time world champion across formats confirming he will compete in the elite event, which is set to shift from Stavanger to Oslo.

Having never missed his home tournament in the last 13 years, Carlsen had cast doubts over his participation this year after expressing a desire to gradually move away from classical chess. Norway Chess is a classical-format event and Carlsen has won it seven times.

The announcement, however, ended all uncertainty, with the world No. 1 Carlsen, fresh from a grand double at the World Rapid and Blitz Championships in Doha, set to defend the title in the 24 May - 5 June tournament. The tournament is expected to once again see Indian players compete at the new venue. No Indian has ever won the prestigious title so far. *—PTI*

Real Madrid gets rid of Xabi, Arbeloa made coach

MADRID, 13 JAN

Real Madrid have replaced **Xabi Alonso** with B team manager Álvaro Arbeloa, just eight months after Alonso took over as first-team coach. The decision came a day after Madrid lost 3-2 to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia.

The club said Alonso left by mutual agreement, praising him as a "Real Madrid legend" and thanking his coaching staff. "Real Madrid will always be his home," the statement added.

Alonso, who succeeded Carlo Ancelotti last May, faced mounting pressure as the team struggled on the pitch and in the dressing room. Reports suggested tensions with players, including Vinícius Júnior, over substitutions and team management. Following Sunday's loss, Alonso reportedly tried to organise a guard of honour for Barcelona during the awards ceremony, but players, including Kylian Mbappé, refused.

Mbappé was the first to publicly bid farewell, posting on Instagram: "It's been short but a pleasure to play for you... Best of luck for your next chapter." Other players also thanked Alonso, though Vinícius did not publicly comment. Alonso did not make any statement. During his tenure, Alonso managed 34 matches across all competitions, winning 24, losing six, and drawing four. Madrid won the season's first Clasico 2-1 but still trail Barcelona by four points at mid-season. The team's next match is Wednesday at Albacete in the Copa del Rey round of 16.

Arbeloa, 42, who played alongside Alonso at Madrid and Spain, has coached Madrid B and youth teams since June. As a player, he won eight titles with Madrid and the 2010 World Cup with Spain, making him a familiar figure to lead the first team. *—PTI*

Govt wants sports federation to form panel for global ties

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

The Sports Ministry has asked every national federation to constitute a "Committee on International Relations" to ensure better cooperation with world bodies on issues such as joint training programmes and hosting of major competitions in India.

In addition, it has also asked National Sports Federations (NSFs) to constitute "Make in India in Sports Committees" to engage with Indian manufacturers, start-ups, research institutions, and testing and standardisation bodies to bolster the sports manufacturing ecosystem. In its communication to the NSFs, the ministry said the international relations committee should comprise senior members of the federation, former international athletes, coaches and "subject experts with proven experience in global sports administration and diplomacy." "The details of the committee, including its composition and terms of reference, may kindly be communicated to this Ministry within 30 days from the date of issuance of this advisory," the Ministry letter to the NSFs stated. The advisory comes a few days after Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao urged NSF officials to leave day-to-day administration to CEOs and focus on building ties internationally for India's benefit.

The committee will be entrusted with the task of monitoring developments in their respective International Federation , Continental Federation, including changes in competition rules and structures, and governance frameworks. *—PTI*

WRESTLER JASKARAN FACES EXTENSION OF BAN AFTER BREACH OF CONDITIONS

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Indian wrestler Jaskaran Singh is facing an extension of his three-year ban after competing in an international tournament in Iran despite being under a period of ineligibility, drawing the ire of the International Testing Agency (ITA).

The ITA, which manages anti-doping programmes on behalf of United World Wrestling (UWW), has issued Jaskaran a formal notice for an apparent violation of Article 10.14.1 of the UWW Anti-Doping Rules, which strictly prohibits athletes from participating in any competition during a period of ineligibility.

Jaskaran is currently serving a three-year ban from July 19, 2023, to July 18, 2026, imposed after he tested positive for the prohibited substance Ligandrol

during the UWW Asian Championships (U20) in Jordan in July 2023.

According to the ITA, Jaskaran nevertheless participated in the Takhti Cup 2025 in Isfahan, Iran, between 8 and 9May, 2025, barely two weeks after the sanctioning decision was issued.

He went on to win the gold medal in the men's 65kg freestyle category at the tournament, which was sanctioned by the Iranian Amateur Wrestling Federation, a UWW member body. *—PTI*

INDIA OPEN SUPER 750

Int'l players flag 'unhealthy' venue in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt on Tuesday criticised the playing conditions at the new venue of the India Open Super 750 at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, saying the shift from KD Jadhav Hall has done little to improve the "unhealthy and unprofessional" environment for players.

She urged the Badminton World Federation (BWF) to intervene ahead of the World Championships later this year.

Blichfeldt, who advanced to the second round, said cold conditions made warm-ups difficult. "Everyone is warming up in two layers of pants, jackets, gloves and hats. It's not good preparation for a player who has to move fast and go into splits," she said.

Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt urged the Badminton World Federation (BWF) to intervene ahead of the World Championships later this year *PHOTO: ANI*

She also raised concerns about birds in the warm-up area, describing it as "really unhealthy and not normal."

"I hope everyone around the tournament, the association and BWF look into this," she added, warning that poor conditions could lead to illness or injury.

Despite health concerns, Blichfeldt praised the arena itself. "It's huge, fits my game really well. I'm happy with the court conditions but not the health conditions," she said.

Other players echoed her concerns. Canada's Michelle Li noted it was "hard to warm up" and the bigger stadium created more drafts. Former world champion Ratchanok Intanon called for heaters, saying, "It is still very cold for us. I hope we get a much warmer place for the World Championships."

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) had shifted the tournament to prepare for hosting the World Championships after 17 years. Players say while the arena is impressive, professional standards around health and safety remain inadequate. *—PTI*

Lakshya Sen eases into India Open's second round

NEW DELHI, 13 JAN

Ace shuttler Lakshya Sen advanced to the second round of the India Open Super 750 with a dominant straight-games win over compatriot Ayush Shetty in the men's singles opening round at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on Tuesday.

The 2021 World Championships bronze medalist asserted his superiority early, using sharp net play and sustained pressure to race to a 17-6 lead in the opening game. Ayush, making his debut at the USD 950,000 tournament, staged a brief recovery but Lakshya quickly regained control to take the first game 21-12.

The second game saw Ayush start with greater confidence, opening a 5-1 lead and holding a narrow 11-10 advantage at the interval. However, Lakshya

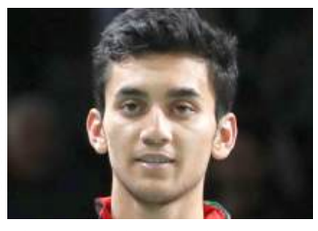


PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

adapted well to the hall conditions and tightened his grip after the break, capitalising on his opponent's unforced errors to pull clear. A series of mistakes handed Lakshya six match points, and he sealed the contest 21-15 with a decisive winner. Lakshya said adapting to the drift and pace of the court was crucial in the opening round, adding that he is taking the season one match at a time while aiming to peak at major events later in the year, including the Asian Games and World Championships. *—PTI*